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A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE MODERN AGE

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE MODERN AGE

By EGON FRIEDELL

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY CHARLES FRANCIS ATKINSON

PLAN OF THE COMPLETE WORK

VOLUME I.

INTRODUCTION

Book One — Renaissance and Reformation: from the Black Death to the Thirty Years' War

VOLUME II.

Book Two — Baroque and Rococo: from the Thirty Years' War to the Seven Years' War

Book Three — Enlightenment and Revolution: from the Seven Years' War to the Congress of Vienna

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Book Four — Romanticism and Liberalism: from the Congress of Vienna to the Franco-German War

Book Five — Imperialism and Impressionism: from the Franco-German War to the World War

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A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE MODERN AGE

THE CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN SOUL

FROM THE BLACK DEATH TO THE WORLD WAR

BY

EGON FRIEDELL

Translated from the German
by
CHARLES FRANCIS ATKINSON

VOLUME I.

INTRODUCTION

Book One—Renaissance and Reformation: from the Black Death to the Thirty Years' War

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To

BERNARD SHAW

If anyone wonders why, after so many other histories have been written, I also should have had the idea of writing one, let him begin by reading through all those others, then turn to mine, and after that he may wonder, if he will.

FLAVIUS ARRIANOS
A. D. (*95–180*)

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INTRODUCTION

What is Cultural History and Why is it Studied?

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> *"To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is not merely the proper occupation of the historian, but the inalienable privilege of any man of parts and culture."*
>
> *Oscar Wilde*

The forgotten star

Through the unfathomable depths of space there wander countless stars, luminous thoughts of God, blest instruments on which the Creator plays. They are all happy — for God desires a happy world. A single one there is amongst them which does not share this happiness; on it, only men have arisen.

How did this come about? Did God forget that star? Or did He honour it supremely by giving it leave to soar into bliss through its own efforts? We do not know.

A tiny fraction of the history of this tiny star forms the subject of our story.

We shall do well first to examine briefly the fundamental principles of the work. They are fundamental in the most literal sense, for they lie at the base of the whole structure and, therefore, although they support it, are underground and not easily visible.

All things have their philosophy

The first of these fundamental pillars is formed by our own view of the nature of history-writing. We start from the conviction that history has both an artistic side and a moral side and cannot, therefore, be scientific in character.

History-writing is the philosophy of what has happened. All things have their own philosophy — indeed, all things *are* philosophy. Men and objects and events are embodiments of a definite nature-idea, a peculiar world-purpose. Human intellect has to grope for the idea that lies hidden in every fact, the thought of which it is the mere form. It often happens that things reveal their true meaning at a late stage only. How long it was before the Saviour revealed to us the simple, elementary fact of the human soul; how long before magnetic steel yielded up the secret of its marvellous powers to the seeing eye of Gilbert, and how many mysterious natural forces are still patiently waiting for *one* to come and release the thought that is in them! That things *happen* is nothing: that they should *become known*, everything. Man had had his slim, well-proportioned bodily structure, his upright, noble gait, and his world-scanning eye for thousands and thousands of years; in India and Peru, in Memphis and Persepolis; but he only became beautiful in the moment when Greek art recognized his beauty and copied it. That is why plants and animals seem always to be wrapped in a peculiar melancholy: they all have beauty, they all symbolize one or another of creation's profound thoughts, but they do not know it, and are sad.

As the whole world is created for the poet, created to fertilize him, so the whole world-history is similarly made up of materials for poets in deed or poets in word. That is its meaning. But who is the poet to whom it gives wings for new deeds and new dreams? All posterity — no more, no less.

Æsthetic, ethical, logical history-writing

It has become usual of late to distinguish three methods of writing history: the *referring* or narrative method, which simply records events; the *pragmatic* or instructive method, which links events by supplying motives and at the same time seeks to draw useful deductions from them; and the *genetic* or evolutionary method, which aims at presenting events as an organic ensemble and course. This classification is, however, anything but strict, since, as a glance will show, these various ways of regarding history overlap: the reference-narrative impinges on the pragmatic or linking variety, and this again on the evolutionary, and not one of them is conceivable as wholly separate from the other two. The classification can, therefore, only be used to this vague and limited extent: in considering each variety, one of the three points of view will be in the foreground. Thus we shall arrive at the following results: in the narrative method, which is primarily concerned with presenting a clear record, the *æsthetic* motive is paramount; in the pragmatic method, where stress is laid above all on instructive application and the moral of the business, it is the *ethical* motive which plays the chief part; and in the genetic method, which strives to present history to the reason with vivid immediacy as an ordered sequence, the *logical* motive is paramount. It follows that the different ages have always preferred one or other of these three methods, each according to its spiritual foundations: the Classical age, in which pure contemplation was developed to the utmost, produced the Classical historian of the reference-narrative order; the eighteenth century, with its tendency to submit all problems to a moralizing test, can show the most brilliant instances of the pragmatic method; and the nineteenth century, bent on reducing everything to logic, clear concepts, and rationality, brought forth the finest fruits of the genetic kind. All three methods have their particular merits and weaknesses, but it is clear that in each the driving, creative motive is supplied by a definite *interest,* whether æsthetic, ethical, or logical in character: the determining though ever-changing criterion of the historian is invariably the "interesting." Nor is this point of view quite so subjective as would appear, for it is controlled (at least within one and the same period) by larger conformities of opinion; but this does not, of course, mean that we can call it objective.

Map and portrait

It might be supposed, now, that narrative history-writing, if limited to a dry, expert setting-forth of facts, would be the first to achieve the ideal of objective representation. Yet even the mere reference type (an intolerable form, it must be said, and one which, except at quite primitive levels, is never attempted) takes on a subjective character through the unavoidable *selection* and *grouping* of the facts. Indeed, the function of *all* thinking — and, for that matter, of our whole imaginative life — consists without exception in this elective, selective procedure, which, in the mere course of its operation, arranges its extracts from reality in a definite order. And this process, performed unconsciously by our sense-organs, is repeated consciously in the natural sciences. There is nevertheless one cardinal difference. The selection made by our sense-organs and by the natural sciences, which are built up on what those organs communicate, is finally determined by the human *genus,* according to strict and unequivocal laws which control the thought and imagination of every normal person. The choice of historical material, on the other hand, is determined by the free opinion of *individuals,* of particular groups of individuals, or (in the most favourable conditions) by the public opinion of a whole age. Some years ago, Professor Erich Becher of Munich made an attempt in his *Geisteswissenschaften und Naturwissenschaften* to produce a sort of comparative anatomy of the sciences, a technology of individual disciplines, standing in relation to these much as dramaturgy stands to the art of the theatre. We find in his work the following sentence: "Science simplifies the incomprehensible complexity of reality through abstraction. . . . The historian, in sketching a portrait of Freiherr vom Stein, separates it out from innumerable details of his life and work, and the geographer, working out a mountain tract, separates out his picture from mole-hills and furrows." But from this very juxtaposition it becomes evident that geography and history cannot be co-ordinated as sciences on a common level. For while there is a quite unmistakable sign for mole-hill and furrow — namely, the simple optical one of size and extension — no such generally applicable formula can be established for the corresponding " negligible quantities " in Stein's biography. The poetic intuition, the historical rhythm, and the psychological flair of the biographer, alone decide which details he is to omit, which to touch upon, and which to paint in with a broad brush. Geographer and historian are in the same relation as map and portrait. It is quite definitely one *geometrical* vision, common to all and, in addition, mechanically adjustable, which tells us which furrows to include in a geographical map; but it is our *artistic* vision, varying in the degree of its fineness and acuteness from man to man and incapable of exact check, which tells us which wrinkles to put into a biographical portrait.

The geographical map would not even correspond to the historical table that simply notes down the facts in chronological order. For, in the first place, it is evident that such a table cannot fairly be called a small-scale repetition of the original with the same justification as a map can be so described. Secondly, an amorphous piling-up of dates would not have the character of a science at all. According to Becher's definition, which may be considered more or less unassailable, a science is " an objectively arranged ensemble of questions and of probable and proved judgments together with the relevant experiments and preliminary data which link them together." None of these qualifications is fulfilled by a bare table, which contains neither questions nor judgments, neither experiments nor proofs. As well might we call an address-book, a school note-book, or a racing result a scientific product.

Thus we reach the conclusion that as soon as reference-history attempts to be a science it ceases to be objective, and as soon as it attempts to be objective it ceases to be a science.

School-book history

As regards the pragmatic method of writing history, it is hardly necessary to prove that this is the exact opposite of scientific objectivity. From its very essence it is tendencious, even deliberately and consciously so. It is, therefore, about as remote from pure science, which seeks merely to establish, as didactic poetry is removed from pure art, which seeks merely to represent. It regards the world's occurrences in the aggregate as a collection of vouchers and examples for certain doctrines which it desires to corroborate and to spread; it has definitely and emphatically the text-book quality; it is bent on demonstrating something all the time. But although it thus stands condemned as a science, it does not thereby lose its right to exist, any more than didactic poetry does so because it is not pure art. The highest literary product known to us, the Bible, belongs to didactic poetry; and some of the most powerful writers of history — Tacitus, Machiavelli, Bossuet, Schiller, Carlyle — have been pragmatic in tendency.

Unscientific character of the basic concepts of history-writing

As a reaction against pragmatism there has recently been a vogue for the genetic method. This aims at tracing the organic development of events with strict impartiality, purely in the light of historical causality — as, say, a geologist studies the history of the earth's crust or a botanist the history of plants. But it was a mistake to suppose that this could be done. First, because once the conception of evolution had been admitted, the new system entered the province of *reflection,* and became at the worst an empty and arbitrary construction of history, at the best a profound and imaginative historical philosophy; but in no case a science. For, in fact, to treat it as comparable with natural sciences is completely misleading. The earth's history lies before us in unambiguous documents: anyone who can read these documents can write that history. The historian has no such simple, plain, reliable documents available. Man has in all ages been an extremely complex, polychrome, contradictory creature who refuses to yield up his ultimate secret. The whole of subhuman nature has a very uniform character; but humanity consists of nothing but non-recurring individuals. A lily seed will always produce a lily, and the history of this seed can be determined in advance with almost mathematical precision; but a human embryo always produces something that has never before existed and will never be repeated. The history of nature perpetually repeats itself, working with a few refrains which it is never tired of repeating; the history of humanity never repeats itself, for it has at its disposal an inexhaustible store of ideas from which new melodies constantly detach themselves.

In the second place, if the genetic method sets out to prove cause and effect with the same scientific accuracy as nature research, it is equally doomed to failure. Historical causality is simply incapable of being unravelled. It is made up of so many elements that for us the character of causality is completely lost. Then, again, physical movements and their laws can be established by direct observation, while historical movements and their laws can only be recalled in imagination; in the one case movements can be re-*examined* at will, in the other they must be re-*created*. In short, the only way of penetrating into historic causality is the artist's way, that of creative experience.

Thirdly and lastly, the demand for impartiality proves to be impossible of fulfilment. Historical research, in contrast to nature-research, appraises its objects. This in itself should not prevent it from being scientific in character; for its scale of values might well be of an objective order, if, for example, it were based on some quantitative theory like mathematics or on some energetic theory like physics. But in fact — and here the sharp dividing line appears — there is in history no absolutely valid standard by which quantity and force may be measured. I know, for example, that the number 17 is bigger than the number 3, or that a circle is greater than a segment of the same radius; but I am not able to deliver judgment upon historical persons and events with the same certainty and documented assurance. If I say: Cæsar was greater than Brutus or Pompey, my statement cannot be proved any more than the contrary — which, in fact, absurd as it seems to us, was the opinion held for centuries. We think it perfectly natural to call Shakspere the greatest dramatist who ever lived, yet this verdict only became general about the turn of the eighteenth century — the time when most people considered Vulpius, the author of *Rinaldo Rinaldini*, to be a greater poet than his brother-in-law Goethe. Raphael Mengs, in the judgment of posterity an insipid and idealless eclectic, ranked in his day as one of the world's greatest painters, and El Greco, whom we worship today as the most grandiose genius of the Baroque, was even half a century ago so little appreciated that his name did not appear in the old edition of *Meyer's Konversations-Lexikon.* Charles the Bold imposed himself on his century as the most brilliant of heroes and rulers, whereas we see him as nothing but a knightly freak. In the same century lived Joan of Arc; yet Chastellain (most conscientious and witty chronicler of his age) included in his *Mystère,* written on the death of Charles VII, all the army commanders who fought against the King of England without ever mentioning the Maid of Orleans. To us, on the other hand, her memory is practically all that remains of that time. Greatness is in fact, as Jakob Burckhardt says, a mystery: "The attribute is bestowed or withheld far more through some vague instinct than upon a considered judgment based on evidences."

Subterranean course of historical action

Recognizing this difficulty, historians have looked about them for another standard of values, saying: let us call everything historical which is effective; let a person or an event be rated highly or otherwise according to the range and permanence of the influence. But here again it is the same as with the conception of historical greatness. In dealing with gravitation or electricity we can say exactly in each individual case whether, where, and to what extent it is effective; but in dealing with the forces and figures of history, this is not so, in the first place because the angle from which we are supposed to take its measurement is not unambiguously defined. For the economist the introduction of Alexandrines will play a very inferior rôle, and the invention of the ophthalmoscope will leave the theologian cold. All the same it is just conceivable that a genuinely universal researcher and observer might do justice equally to all the forces which have left their mark in history, although his undertaking would meet with almost insurmountable obstacles. A far greater difficulty is presented by the fact that much of the working of history takes place underground, and only becomes visible after a great lapse of time, if then. We do not know the real forces which mysteriously propel our development; we can only sense a deep-lying connexion, never obtain a continuous record of it. Suetonius writes in his biography of the Emperor Claudius: "At that time the Jews, incited by a certain Chrestus, stirred up strife and discontent in Rome and had, therefore, to be expelled." It is true that Suetonius was no such shining light in history as, for instance, Thucydides; he was merely an excellent compiler and writer-up of the world's small-talk, a mediocrity with taste and diligence; but on that very account his remark shows us fairly accurately the estimation in which Christianity was officially held by the average educated man of the day. It was regarded as an obscure Jewish nuisance. And yet Christianity was even then a world-power. It had long been felt at work and its effects were increasing day by day, but they were not tangible or visible.

Ranke's error

Many research-historians have, therefore, set their standard still lower, demanding no more of a historian than that he should reflect in a purely objective manner the knowledge of events available at any particular time, making use (inevitably) of normal historical standards of value, but refraining from all personal judgments. But even this modest demand cannot be satisfied. For unfortunately man proves to be an incurably critical creature. Not only is he obliged to use certain "general" standards, which, like inferior yard-sticks, expand or contract with each change of the public temperature, but he feels within him the impulse to interpret or embellish or abuse everything that comes within his range of vision — in short, to falsify and distort it, justifying himself all the time by the fact of being driven by irresistible forces — for indeed it is only by such purely personal and one-sided judgments that he can feel his way in the moral world that is the world of history. Nothing but his purely subjective standpoint enables him to stand firmly in the present and from there to send his glance, at once comprehensive and analytical, into the infinity of past and future. To this day no single historical work has achieved objectivity in the sense postulated. Should any mortal prove capable of such a triumph of impartiality, it would be extremely difficult to establish the fact; for that would entail finding a second mortal equal to the exertion of reading anything so dull.

Ranke's avowed intention to tell the story "as it really happened" sounded modest enough, but was really a very bold undertaking — in which, in fact, he failed. His importance as a historian he owed entirely to being a great thinker. He did not discover new "facts," but only new associations which his own creative genius impelled him to project, construe, and mould by the aid of an inner vision that no knowledge of sources, however vast, and no critical attitude towards them, however keen and incorruptible, could have given him.

All history is legend

For however numerous the new sources one opens up, there is never a living one among them. Once a man dies he is removed once and for all from the view of our senses. All that is left is the lifeless impression of his general outline, and the process of incrustation, fossilization, and petrifaction immediately sets in, even in the consciousness of those who actually lived with him. He becomes stone, becomes legend. Bismarck already is a legend, and even Ibsen is on the way to becoming one. In due time we shall all be legends. Certain features stand out with undue prominence because, for some often quite arbitrary reason, they have impressed themselves on our memory. Sections and pieces alone remain. The *whole* has ceased to exist, has sunk irrevocably into the darkness of the has-been. The past draws not so much a curtain as a veil over things that have happened, making them misty and unclear, but at the same time mysterious and suggestive: so that all that is passed is wrapped for us in the shimmer and fragrance of a magical happening. And this it is which constitutes the main charm of all our dealings with history.

Every age has its own peculiar picture of the various pasts that are accessible to its consciousness. Legend is not merely one of the forms, but the only form in which we are able to think or imagine history, or live it over again. All history is saga, myth, and as such is the product of the particular state of our spiritual potentials, or imaginative power, or formative power, and our view of the world. Take for instance the imagination-complex "Greek antiquity." It existed at first as the present, as the condition of those who lived and suffered in it. At that time it was an extremely turbid, suspect, unguaranteed, precarious something that one had to guard against, although it was so hard to grasp, and at bottom not worth the infinite pains one took over it; yet it was indispensable — for it was life. But even for the men of Imperial Rome the earlier Greece stood for something incomparably high, bright and strong, full of import and securely poised, an unattainable paradigm of blessed purity, simplicity, and thoroughness; a desideratum of the highest kind. Then, in the Middle Ages, it became a dull, grey, leaden past; a dismal patch from which God's eye was averted, a sort of earthly hell full of greed and sin, a gloomy theatre for human passions. In the eyes of the German Enlightment, again, Classical Greece was a kind of natural museum, a practical course of art-history and archæology, the temples museums of antiques, the market-places galleries of sculpture. Athens itself was a permanent open-air exhibition; all Greeks were either sculptors or sculptors' walking models, all noble and graceful in their pose, all with wise and resounding speeches on their lips; the philosophers were professors of æsthetics, their women heroic figures of public fountain statuary, the people's assemblies living pictures. For this society, with its boring perfections, the *fin de siècle* substituted the problematical or indeed hysterical type of Greek who was not in the least a well-balanced, peaceful, and harmonious creature, but on the contrary a highly coloured, opaline mixture, tortured by a profound and hopeless pessimism and dogged by a pathological lack of restraint which betrayed his Asiatic origin. Between these two utterly different conceptions there were numerous transitions, sub-classes, and fine shades, and it will be one of our tasks in the present work to examine somewhat more closely this interesting play of colour in the conception of the " Classical."

Every age, practically every generation, has naturally a different ideal, and with the change of ideal comes a change in the glance that is sent to explore the great individual sections of the past. It will be, according to circumstances, a transfiguring, gilding, hypostasizing glance, or one that poisons and blackens, an evil eye.

The intellectual history of mankind consists in a continuous reinterpretation of the past. Men like Cicero or Wallenstein can be evidenced from a thousand original sources and have left definite, powerful traces of their influence on innumerable items of fact; yet no one knows to this day whether Cicero was a shallow opportunist or an important character, Wallenstein a low traitor or a brilliant exponent of *Realpolitik*. None of the men who have made world-history have escaped being called adventurers, charlatans, and even criminals from time to time — for instance, Mohammed, Luther, Cromwell; Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and a hundred others. There is only a single one of whom no one has dared to say these things, and on that very account we see in him not a man, but the Son of God.

Homunculus and Euphorion

The best in a man, says Goethe, has no form. And if it be almost impossible to gain access to the ultimate secret essence of a single individual and discover "the law whereby . . ." how vastly more absurd still is it to make the attempt in the case of mass movements, the deeds of the collective human soul in which the lines of force of numerous individualities cross each other. Even biology, which, after all, deals with clearly defined types, is no longer an exact natural science, but feeds on a variety of hypotheses that are subject to the philosophy of the moment. Where life begins, science ends; where science begins, life ends.

The historian's position would, therefore, be entirely hopeless did not a way out suggest itself in a further saying of Goethe's: "The material can be seen by all, the meaning only by him who has something to put to it." Or — to replace two of Goethe's *aperçus* by two of Goethe's figures — the historian who builds up history "scientifically" simply from the material is the Wagner, who in his retort brings forth the bloodless Homunculus, incapable of life; while the historian who forms history by adding something of his own is Faust himself, who by his marriage with Helena, the Spirit of the Past, produces the healthy Euphorion. True, he is as short-lived as Homunculus, but it is for the opposite reason — he has *too much* life in him.

"The attempt to treat history scientifically," says Spengler, "always at bottom involves contradictions. . . . It is Nature that is to be treated scientifically. History is the business of a poet. All other solutions are impure." The difference between historian and poet is in fact only one of degree. The frontier at which imagination has to call a halt is, for the historian, the state of historical knowledge in expert circles; for the poet, the state of historical knowledge among the public. Neither is poetry entirely free in forming historical figures and events: there is a line which it may not cross with impunity. A drama, for instance, which represented Alexander the Great as a coward, his teacher Aristotle as an ignoramus, and allowed the Persians to defeat the Macedonians in battle, would lose its æsthetic effect by so doing. There is always indeed a very intimate connexion between the great dramatic poets and the ruling historical sources of their day. Shakspere dramatized the Cæsar of Plutarch; Shaw the Cæsar of Mommsen; Shakspere's king-dramas reflect the historical knowledge of the English public in the sixteenth century with precisely the same accuracy as Strindberg's stories the historical knowledge of the Swedish reader in the nineteenth. Today Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and Hauptmann's *Florian Geyer* appear to us fantastic as pictures of the Reformation; but when they were new they were not regarded as such, for both of them were rooted in the scientific research and opinion of their time. In short, the historian is nothing but a poet who has adopted the strictest naturalism as his unwavering principle.

" Historical novels "

Professional historians are apt to dismiss contemptuously as " novels " all historical works which are not merely impersonal, laborious collections of material. But after one to two generations at most their own works turn out to be novels, the sole difference being that theirs are empty, boring, uninspired, and liable to be killed by a single " find "; whereas a truly worthy history-novel can never become a " back number " as regards its deeper significance. Herodotus is not a back number, although he recorded for the most part things which every elementary schoolmaster can refute; Montesquieu is not a back number, although his writings are full of palpable errors; Herder is not a back number, although he put forward historical opinions which today are considered amateurish; Winckelmann is not a back number, although his interpretation of Classical Greece was one great misconception; Burckhardt is not a back number, although Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, the present-day pope of Classical philology, has said that his cultural history of Greece " so far as science is concerned has no existence." The point is that even if everything which these men taught should prove erroneous, *one* truth would always remain and could never become antiquated: the truth as regards the artistic personality behind the work, the important person who experienced these wrong impressions, reflected, and gave form to them. When Schiller writes ten pages of vivid German prose on an episode in the Thirty Years' War which bears no resemblance to what really happened, he does more for historical knowledge than a hundred pages of " reflections based on the latest documents," written without a philosophical outlook and in barbarous German. When Carlyle works up the story of the French Revolution into the drama of a whole people, forced onward by powerful forces and counter-forces to fulfil its bloody destiny, he may be said to have written a novel — even a "thriller" — but the mysterious atmosphere of infinite significance in which this poetical work is bathed acts as a magic insulating sheath to preserve it intact from age to age. Then, again, is not Dante's unreal vision of Hell the most competent historical picture of the Middle Ages which we possess to this day? Homer, too, what was he but a historian "with insufficient knowledge of sources"? All the same, he is and always will be right, even though one day it should transpire that no Troy ever existed.

All our utterances about the past refer equally to ourselves. We can never speak of and never know anything except ourselves. But by sinking ourselves in the past we discover new possibilities of our own ego, enlarge the frontiers of our consciousness, and undergo new if wholly subjective experiences. Therein lies the value and the aim of all historical study.

To put all this in a sentence: What this book attempts to tell is no more and no less than *today's legend of modern history.*

Incompleteness as far as possible

We often find in the preface to a learned work some such remark as this: "Completeness, as far as possible, has naturally been my aim throughout; it is for my respected colleagues to decide whether I have left any gaps." Now my own standpoint is the exact opposite. Quite apart from the fact that I should not dream of letting my respected colleagues decide anything whatever, I am inclined to say that incompleteness, as far as possible, has been my aim throughout. It will perhaps be said that I need not trouble myself, that the incompleteness would be there without any effort of mine. But, even so, a definite will towards fragment and section, nude and torso, scraps and odd pieces, lends a certain character to any production. We can never see the world other than incompletely; *deliberately* to see it incomplete is to create an *artistic* aspect. Art is the subjective, preferential treatment of certain elements of reality; it selects and resets, distributes light and shade, omits and underlines, softens and emphasizes. My consistent attempt is to render only a single segment or arc, profile or bust, a modest *veduta* of certain very big ensembles and developments. *Pars pro toto:* this figure is by no means the least effective and clear. A single movement of the hand will often characterize for us a whole person, a single detail a whole event, more acutely, impressively, and essentially than the most elaborate description. In short, the *anecdote* in all its implications appears to me as the only art-form one may justifiably use in writing cultural history. The " father of history " knew that. Emerson places him among those who " cannot be spared ": " Herodotus, whose history contains innumerable anecdotes, which brought it with the learned into a sort of disesteem; but in these days — when it is found that what is most memorable in history is a few anecdotes, and that we need not be alarmed though we should find it not dull — it is regaining credit." Nietzsche appears to have held the same view: " Three anecdotes, and you have the picture of a man." Montaigne, too, tells us that proofs obtained from anecdotes were, provided they did not exceed the bounds of possibility, as welcome to him in his organized investigations into the customs and natural passions of his fellow men as proofs taken from the world of reality. Whether an incident really happened or did not happen, in Rome or in Paris, to Tom, Dick, or Harry, he found that the story always contained some feature of human history from which he could take warning or instruction. He noted down such and used them, picking out from the varying interpretations that an anecdote might bear the one which seemed to him most unusual and striking.

Exaggeration

This brings us to a second peculiarity of all successful history: exaggeration. Macaulay was of opinion that the best portraits were possibly those which had a touch of caricature, and the best historical works those which contained a discreet admixture of literary exaggeration. The slight loss in accuracy was, he considered, compensated by the increase in effect; and although the weaker lines might be obliterated, the characteristic features stood out the more boldly and left an ineffaceable impression. Exaggeration is the implement of every artist, and, therefore, of the historian. History is a great convex mirror in which the features of the past stand out all the more expressively and distinctly for being enlarged and distorted. Our aim is to produce, not a statistical, but an anecdotal version of the new age; not an official record of the modern society of nations, but their family chronicle or — why not? — their *chronique scandaleuse*. If, then, cultural history is inevitably fragmentary and even one-sided in its content, its intention as regards scope should be the very reverse. For its domain of research and delineation includes or should include literally everything — any and every manifestation of humanity's life. Let us make a short survey of these various aspects, and at the same time try to fix a sort of scale of values. Needless to say, this is the first and last time that this pigeon-hole method will be used, for it has at best only a theoretical and at no time any practical value, since it is of the very essence of a Culture that it should form a unity.

Economics

The lowest grade in the hierarchy of human activities is occupied by *economic life*, under which is included everything concerned with the satisfaction of material needs. It is, so to say, the raw material of a Culture, nothing more; though as such naturally of great importance. There is, it is true, a well-known theory according to which the " entire social, political, and spiritual life-process " is determined by " material conditions of production," and the battles of the nations are only seemingly fought on questions of constitutional rights or world-outlook or religion — the ideological secondary motives, we are told, that cloak the actual primary motives of economic contrasts. But this extreme materialism is itself much more of an ideology than any idealist systems ever invented. Economic life, far from being an adequate expression of any given Culture, does not, strictly speaking, belong to the Culture at all, but only contributes one of its preliminary conditions, and not even the most vital one at that. It has little definite influence on the deepest and strongest cultural forms: religion, art, and philosophy. The Homeric poetry is the product of Greek polytheism, Euripides a slice of the Greek Enlightenment, Gothic architecture a complete expression of mediæval theology, Bach the quintessence of German Protestantism, Ibsen a compendium of all the ethical and social problems of the closing nineteenth century; but is there any remotely comparable manifestation of the Greek economic life in Homer and Euripides, of the mediæval in Gothic architecture, of the modern in Bach and Ibsen? It may be — and often has been — said that Shakspere is unthinkable without the rise of England's commercial power, but does this mean that we should be justified in saying that English commerce was a ferment to his drama, a component of his poetic atmosphere? Or could, say, Nietzsche rightly be called a translation of the blossoming of Germany's rising industrial power into philosophy and poetry? He stands in no relation to it, not the smallest, not even that of antagonism. As for the theory that religions "only reflect the particular social state brought about by the productive conditions of the time," it would be ludicrous were it not so vulgar.

Society

Above economic life rises *society*, which is closely connected but not identical with it. That the two are identical is indeed a view often put forward. Even so acute and wide-seeing a thinker as Lorenz von Stein inclines to it. The question is not so simple as that, though. The separate orders of society did undoubtedly originate in the distribution of estates: thus feudalism was based essentially on its estates, the reign of the bourgeoisie on capital, and the power of the clergy on Church lands. But in the course of historical development property-relations shift while the social structure to a certain extent remains firm. This is borne out by the appearance of every description of aristocracy. Aristocracy of birth had long ceased to be economically the strongest class when it was still socially the most powerful. There is even today a kind of money-aristocracy, represented by the holders of hereditary fortunes that have been handed down for generations, and these representatives take far higher rank in society than the new rich, who are usually far more opulent. There are, further, an official, a military, and an intellectual aristocracy: all of them social strata which have never wielded any special economic power. Neither does the privileged position of the clergy rest upon economic causes.

State

Even less than society does the *State* admit of identification with economics. Often as it has been asserted that the State is nothing but the constitutional, legal, and administrative settlement of existing economic conditions, it should be remembered that every state, even the most imperfect, is founded on some high ideal which it seeks more or less honestly to carry out. If it were not so, the phenomenon of patriotism would be inexplicable. In it comes to expression the fact that the State is no mere organization, but an organism, a higher living being with its own claims to existence and laws of development, which for all their occasional absurdity are entirely genuine. It has a special will of its own which is something more than the simple mechanical summation of all the individual wills. It is a mystery, a monstrosity, a divinity, a beast, according to taste; but its existence is beyond the possibility of denial. That is why the emotions with which men regard this higher being have always been marked by exaggeration, emotiveness, and monomania. The fatherland in all its changing forms has always had something sacrosanct for the citizen — and not only in the Classical age, when, as we know, state and religion coincided, or in the Middle Ages, when the State was subordinated to the Church but by that very fact became invested with religious sanctity — but also in modern times. In the result, political history has been judged very one-sidedly and over-estimated. Even in the eighteenth century, world-history was still nothing but the history of "its potentates," and only a generation ago Treitschke wrote: "What we have to record is a nation's deeds; history's heroes are statesmen and generals." Until quite recently history stood for a dull, barren registering of troop movements and diplomatic shufflings, successive rulerships and parliamentary negotiations, sieges, and peace treaties. Even the most enlightened historians have spent themselves in research over these most uninteresting portions of human destinies, recorded them, and made them into problems. Yet they really play no part or at most a very subordinate one, being merely a uniform repetition of the fact that man is half a beast of prey, savage and greedy and cunning, and the same all the world over.

Custom

Even if the view of history were to be limited to the life of the State, the political historian's treatment would be too narrow. He normally concerns himself solely with military and administrative history, whereas he should at the very least include as well the development of the *Church* and the *Law,* two fields hitherto abandoned to specialists. Added to these should be the extremely important circle of life-expressions which we are accustomed to sum up as *manners and customs.* It is here precisely — in their food and clothing, balls and funerals, letters and couplets, flirtations and domesticity, sociability and gardening — that men of every age reveal themselves in their real desires and antipathies, their strength and weakness, prejudice and knowledge, health and sickness, nobility and absurdity.

Science, art, philosophy, religion

Turning to the domain of intellectual and spiritual life, we shall find that *science* takes the lowest place. To it belong all forms of *discovery* and *invention* together with *technology,* which is no more than science applied to practical ends. Every age sets up, so to say, its own inventory of the sciences, a balance-sheet of all the results gained by reflection and experience. Next above the sciences comes the domain of *art.* If one wished to arrange the arts according to degree (little as there is to gain by so doing), one might place them according to the degree of their dependence on material. The following order would then ensue: architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, music. But this is rather a pedantic trifling. All one can say with reasonable justification is that music does actually take highest rank among the arts — as being the most profound and comprehensive, the most independent and the most moving — and that of all forms of poetry drama represents the highest cultural achievement, that of creating a new world, of fashioning a microcosm, that detaches itself, self-contained, from the poet and so presents itself to our living contemplation.

Philosophy, in so far as it is real philosophy and, therefore, one of the creative activities, ranks equally with art. It is, as Hegel long ago pointed out, the self-consciousness of each particular age, and it is therefore poles apart from a science, which is merely a consciousness of the details that the outer world offers us rhapsodically and without higher sensible or logical unity. That is why Schopenhauer, too, said that the main branch of history was the history of philosophy: "This is really the ground bass, whose notes sound through into the other history, and there, too, by virtue of being its fundamental, leads the opinion that dominates the world. Philosophy, therefore, rightly understood, is in truth the most powerful material force, though it takes effect very slowly." And in fact the history of philosophy is the heart of cultural history, or even — if we accept Schopenhauer's conception in all its implications — the whole of cultural history. For what are tone-sequences and orders of battle, skirts and regulations, vases and metres, dogmas and the shapes of roofs, but the outpoured philosophy of an age?

The successes of great conquerors and kings are nothing by comparison with the effect of a single great thought which springs into the world and spreads itself steadily and irresistibly with the force of an elemental event, a geological transformation. Nothing can stand up against it, or alter the fact that it has happened. The thinker is a monstrous, mysterious fatality. He is revolution, the one real and effective revolution among a hundred that are inessential and false. The artist works faster and more vividly, but on that very account his work is not so durable; the thinker works slower, more quietly, but on that very account more permanently. Lessing's philosophical polemics, for instance, with their nimble dialectics and intellectual sparkle, are modern books even today; but his dramas have already a thick layer of dust upon them. Racine's and Molière's figures affect us like mechanical jointed dolls, paper flowers on wires, pink-painted sugar sticks; but the free, strong lucidity of a Descartes or the grand unobvious soul-anatomy of a Pascal retains all its freshness. Even the works of the Greek tragedians have their coat of patina today, which, though it may enhance their artistic value, lessens their vital worth; on the other hand, the dialogues of Plato might have been written yesterday.

The apex and crown of the human culture-pyramid is formed by *religion.* All else is but the massive under-structure supporting its throne, and having no other aim than to lead up to it. In religion is the fulfilment of custom, art, and philosophy. "Religion," writes Friedrich Theodor Vischer, "is the capital of historical symptoms, the Nilometer of the mind."

And thus we arrive at the following as a broad presentation of human culture:

Man

acting	thinking	creating
in economy and society, state and law, church and custom.	in discovery and invention, science and technology.	in art, philosophy, religion.

As an illustrative allegory — a lame one, like the rest, of course — of the significance of the different culture-fields we might take the human organism as our framework. The life of the State would then correspond to the *skeleton,* which forms the coarse, hard, firm scaffolding for the whole body; the economic life to the *alimentary system;* the social life to the *nerve system;* science to the *flesh* and occasionally to the superfluous fat; art to the various *sense-organs;* philosophy to the *brain;* and religion to the *soul* — by which the whole body is held together and put in touch with the invisible higher forces of the universe — whose existence, like the soul's, is often disbelieved by stupid and short-sighted people.

The Philosophers' Stone

It will be seen, therefore, that historical science, rightly interpreted, embraces the whole of human culture and its development. It is a consistent probing for the divine in the world's course and is, therefore, theology; it is research into the basic forces of the human soul and is, therefore, psychology; it is the most illuminating presentation of the forms of state and society and, therefore, is politics; the most varied collection of all art-creations and is, therefore, æsthetics; it is a sort of Philosophers' Stone, a Pantheon of all the sciences. At the same time it is the only form in which we of today have the means to philosophize, an inexhaustibly rich laboratory in which we can undertake the easiest and most profitable experiments on the nature of man.

The representative man

Every age has a definite fund of impulses, fears, dreams, ideas, idiosyncrasies, passions, errors, and virtues. The history of each age is the history of the doings and sufferings of a certain human type which has never before existed so and will never again exist so. We might call it the " representative man " — that is, the man who never appears in experience, and yet presents himself as the diagram or morphological outline on which all real men are built up, the prime plant, as it were, on which they are all modelled; or, as in the animal world, the individual living specimens corresponding to the predatory, the rodent, and the ruminant types without ever actually being pure embodiments of them. Every age has too its particular physiology, its characteristic metabolism, blood-circulation, and pulse-frequency, its specific life-tempo, a general vitality peculiar to itself, and even individual senses of its own, an optic, acoustic, neural character which belongs to it alone.

The history of the different ways of seeing is the history of the world. In this connexion we may usefully adopt for our study of history Johannes Müller's doctrine of the specific sense-energies, according to which the quality of our emotions is determined not by the difference in external stimuli, but by the difference in our receiving apparatus. "Reality" is always and everywhere the same — namely: unknown. But it affects always different sense-nerves, retinæ, brain-cells, and ear-drums. This picture of the world undergoes a change with almost every generation. The fact that even nature, the apparently unalterable, is constantly taking a new form tells us this. Now it is hostile, wild, and cruel, now inviting, intimate, and idyllic; now exuberant and swelling, now bare and ascetic; now picturesque and melting, now sharply contoured and statuesquely stylized. It suggests, alternately, clear and logical purpose and unfathomable mystery; a mere decorative setting for human beings and a bottomless abyss into which they sink; an echo repeating all man's emotions with an amplified intensity, and a dumb emptiness of which he is barely conscious. If there was a wizard who by his magic could reconstruct for us the retina-image of a forest landscape in the eye of an Athenian of the days of Pericles and then the retina-image of the same landscape in the eye of a crusader of the Middle Ages, the two pictures would be quite dissimilar; and if we then went ourselves to the spot and looked at the forest, we should recognize the one no more than the other in it. This tyranny of the *Zeitgeist* goes so far, indeed, that even a photographic camera, reputed the deadest of apparatus, which apparently registers with perfectly mechanical passivity, is affected by our subjectivity. Even the "objective" is not objective. For it is an inexplicable but undeniable fact that, just like a painter, a photographer photographs only himself. If he has the taste of an uneducated, suburban mind, his camera will produce nothing but coarse, vulgar figures; if he has a cultivated mind and an artistic point of view, his pictures will have the superior look of delicate engravings. And that being so, our photographs, like our paintings, will appear to future ages, not as naturalistic reproductions of our outward appearance, but as monstrous caricatures.

The Expressionist dog

More than that: incredible as it may sound, the present writer has for some years possessed an Expressionist dog. I maintain that a creature so hopelessly askew, so drunken of build, as it were, so made up of sheer triangles, has never yet been seen. This may be considered an illusion, but let me illustrate it by a counterexample: could the pug, the typical dog of our forefathers' days, ever have looked expressionistic? Certainly not. That is why it died out, no one knows why or how. Similarly the days of the fuchsia, the favourite plant of the same era, are numbered. It has already retired into remote suburbs, where the novels of Spielhagen and the pictures of Defregger are still to be found in appreciative homes. And how is it that a whole series of perfectly grotesque fish, bearing an uncanny resemblance to submarines or divers, have only been discovered now, in the age of technology? Other examples suggest themselves by the hundred. It is not presumptuous, therefore, to talk about world-history, for it is, in fact, the history of our world, or rather our worlds.

Spiritual costume-history

The aim of this book is to sketch an intellectual and moral picture-page, a spiritual costume-history of the last six centuries, showing at the same time the Platonic Idea of each age and the thought which inwardly inspired it and was its soul. This Thought of the Age is the organizing, the creative, the *only truth* in each age, although in actuality it is seldom seen in the pure state; for what happens is that the prism of the age breaks it up into a many-coloured rainbow of symbols. Only now and then is the age so fortunate as to produce the one great philosopher who reassembles the rays in the focus of his intellect.

And this brings us to the real key of an age. We find it in those great men, those strange apparitions, that Carlyle called Heroes. They might equally well be called poets, if we did not one-sidedly regard a poet as a person who dabbled in pen and ink, but remembered that everything can be turned into poetry, given creative force and imagination; and that the great heroes and saints who have made poetry with their *lives* of deeds and sufferings stand actually higher than the poet of words. Carlyle was convinced that the form in which a great man appears is entirely immaterial. Let him be there, that is the main thing. "I confess, I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be *all* sorts of men" ("The Hero as Poet"). ". . . Given a great soul, open to the Divine Significance of Life, then there is given a man fit to speak of this, to sing of this, to fight and work for this, in a great, victorious, enduring manner; there is given a Hero, — the outward shape of whom will depend on the time and the environment he finds himself in" ("The Hero as Priest"). In history there are only two real wonders of the world: the Spirit of the Age, with its fabulous energies, and Genius, with its magical effect. The man of genius is the most complete absurdity, an absurdity because of his very normality. He is what all others should be: a perfect equation of aim and means, of task and accomplishment. He is so paradoxical as to do what no one else does: he fulfils his destiny.

Now, Genius and the Age are in account with each other in a complicated way, not easy to decipher.

Genius is a product of the age

An age which does not find its hero is a pathological case: its soul is underfed and suffers, so to say, from "chronic dyspnœa." But no sooner does it get its man, who gives utterance to all its needs, than fresh oxygen streams suddenly into its organism, the dyspnœa disappears, the circulation is regulated, and it is well again. Geniuses are the two or three men in every age who can *speak*. (The rest are dumb, or stammerers.) Without these we should know nothing of past ages, for we should merely have hieroglyphics which confused and disappointed us. We need a key to this cipher. Gerhart Hauptmann once compared the poet with an æolian harp, which vibrates to every lightest breeze. If we adopt this comparison we may say: at bottom *every* person is an instrument of this sort with sensitive strings, but in most cases the impact of events merely sets the strings aquiver; it is only from the poet that *notes* are produced for all to hear and understand.

For a particular section of man's spiritual history to be perpetuated in a lasting picture, it seems that one man only is necessary, but that one is indispensable. For the age of Enlightenment a Socrates sufficed in Greece, a Voltaire in France, a Lessing in Germany; for the English Renaissance, a Shakspere; and for our own time a Nietzsche. In such men the whole age is objective as itself, as in an illuminating cross-section that everyone can grasp. The genius is no other than the concentrated formula, the compressed compendium, the easily handled clue — brief, concise, intelligible, and comprehensive — to the desires and achievements of all his contemporaries. He is the strong extract, the clear distillation, the pungent essence which they yield; it is of them he is made. Take it away, and nothing of him would be left; he would dissolve into air. The great man is entirely the creature of his age;

and the greater he is, the more is this the case. This is our first thesis on the nature of genius.

The age is a product of the genius

But who, then, *are* these contemporaries? Who makes them contemporaries, attaches them to a particular limited section of history, endows them with a specific world-feeling, a definite life-atmosphere — in short, a style of their own? Who but "the poet"? It is he who moulds their vital form and cuts the block from which, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are all printed. He multiplies himself mysteriously and thousandfold. Others walk, stand, sit, think, hate, or love according to his directives. He alters our standard expressions of courtesy and our feeling for nature; our hairdressing, our religiousness, our punctuation, our erotic; that which is most sacred and that which is most trivial. His whole age is infected by him. He penetrates irresistibly into our blood, splits our molecules, and tyrannically creates new connexions. We speak his language, use his idiom; and a casual phrase from his mouth becomes a unifying watchword which men call to one another in the night. Streets and woods, churches and ballrooms are peopled suddenly, none knows how, with innumerable miniature copies of Werther, Byron, Napoleon, Oblomov, Hjalmar. The meadows change their hue, trees and clouds take on new shapes, men's looks, gestures, and voices a new accent. Women become bluestockings after Molière's recipe, or the lowest of the low according to Strindberg's vision; broad-hipped and full-bosomed because Rubens at his lonely easel so willed it, slender and anæmic because Rossetti and Burne-Jones carried this picture of them in their heads. It is not by any means correct that the artist depicts reality; on the contrary, it is reality that runs after *him*. It may seem a paradox, as Oscar Wilde says, but it is none the less true that life imitates art far more than art imitates life.

No one can resist these wizards. They give us wings and they cripple us, intoxicate us and sober us. All the remedies and toxins in the world are in their possession. Life springs up where they tread and everything becomes stronger and healthier, "finds itself." This, indeed, is their greatest good deed: that they enable men to find and know themselves from the moment they come into contact with them. But they also bring sickness and death. They unloose in many souls the latent foolishness that might otherwise have slept on for ever. Also they stir up wars, revolutions, social earthquakes. They behead kings, prepare battlefields, sting nations to duels. A good-humoured elderly gentleman named Socrates kills time with aphorisms; an equally good-humoured countryman of his named Plato makes a series of entertaining dialogues out of them; and libraries pile up and up, are burnt at the stake, are burnt as waste paper; new libraries are written and a hundred thousand heads and stomachs live on the name Plato. A high-flown journalist named Rousseau writes a couple of bizarre pamphlets, and for six years a highly gifted people tears itself to pieces. A stay-at-home scholar named Marx, indifferent to and ignored by society, writes a few fat volumes of unintelligible philosophy, and a gigantic empire alters its whole conditions of life from the base upward.

In short, the age is absolutely and entirely the creation of its great man. The more this is so, the greater it is, and the more completely and ripely will it fulfil its destiny. This is our second thesis on the nature of genius.

Genius and age are incommensurable

But what, now, is this genius? An exotic monstrosity, a paradox made flesh, an arsenal of extravagances, whims and perversities; a fool like the rest, nay, more so because more of a man than they are; a pathological freak, profoundly alien to the whole dark, living swirl below him; a stranger, too, to himself, for there is no possible bridge between himself and his ambiance. The great man is the great solitary, and what constitutes his greatness is precisely this: that he is unique, a psychosis, a completely unrelated and unrepeated singular. He has nothing to do with his time, and his time nothing to do with him. This is our third thesis on the nature of genius.

It will be said, perhaps, that these three theses contradict each other. Yes, and if they did not do so, it would be something of a waste of time to write these volumes, which in essence are nothing but a description of individual ages and their heroes. And, on the other hand, for those who believe the erasing rather than the display of contradictions to be the mission of human thought, it will be equally a waste of time to read these volumes.

Pedigree

Before closing this introduction we feel bound to glance at our predecessors with a view to establish what may be called the pedigree of our work. Not that there is any question of a history of cultural history, tempting and profitable as this might be, but purely of a fleeting and aphoristic mention of certain peaks on which the search-lights placed at our entirely personal standpoint may for a moment play. Actually, the very first historical work known to us, Herodotus' story of the battle between the Hellenes and the Barbarians, was, though without quite knowing it, a sort of comparative cultural history. But even Thucydides, the younger contemporary of Herodotus, wrote strictly political history and it was only Aristotle who again drew attention to the importance, even to students of politics, of examining manners, customs, and ways of living. But the Classical age, with its static outlook, could do no more than divine or suggest; for it was never clear to the consciousness of the Greeks that Homeric man was essentially a differently constituted being from Periclean man, and that he in turn differed completely from Alexandrian man. Even less could the Middle Ages grasp the conception of historical evolution. For them everything from all eternity was in God's hands, the world was but a timeless symbol, a mysterious theatre for the battle between the Saviour and Satan, the elect and the damned. Thus it appeared, on the threshold of the Middle Ages, to Augustine, the greatest genius of the Christian Church, and thus movingly he described it in his impressive work: *De civitate Dei*.

Lessing and Herder

The Renaissance thought it had rediscovered the Classical age, but in fact it only celebrated its own world-feeling in the Roman poets and heroes. It was the age of the revival of philology and rhetoric, of the science of art and natural philosophy, but not of cultural history, whose earliest outlines were not grasped until the age of "Enlightenment." This, strictly speaking, goes back to Lord Bacon, and he was in fact the first who demanded of history (and primarily literary history) that it should comprehend and mirror individual ages as unities; "for the sciences," said he, "live and wander like the nations." His demand was, however, understood but by few at the time, and fulfilled by none. Leibniz, the representative philosopher of the Baroque, led the principle of evolution to victory in metaphysics and nature-study, but only in the eighteenth century was it fruitfully applied to history-study — at first in the domain of religion and by Lessing. "Why," he asks, in his *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*,

" do we not choose in all positive religions simply the one and only line along which the human reason of every place can develop and continue to develop, rather than single out one for our derision or anger? Was nothing in the best of worlds deserving of this scorn of ours, this unsympathy, excepting religions only? Is it that God's hand may be felt in everything, only not in our errors? " Herder took the same view in his criticism of poetical creations — the view that every human perfection was an individual thing: " Man forms nothing but what is prompted by period, climate, needs, and world-destiny. The growing tree, the upstriving man, must pass from one age to another in his life, obviously, therefore, progressing." " Even the conception of bliss changes with every condition, every latitude . . . each nation has its centre of bliss within itself as each ball has its centre of gravity." Proceeding on these lines, Herder discovered genius in the Hebrew poetry of the East, the heathen poetry of the North, and the Christian poetry of the Middle Ages. His main interest was centred in folk-poetry: " Just as natural history describes herbs and animals, so do the people here describe themselves." He insisted that a history of the Middle Ages should be not merely a pathology of the head — that is, of the emperor and certain estates of the Empire — but a physiology of the whole national body: of its way of life, education, manners, and speech; and that history should be not a " history of kings, battles, wars, laws, and bad characters," but " a history of the whole of humanity and its conditions, religions, and modes of thought." In the " history of opinions " he sees the key to a history of deeds. But Herder was not the man to carry out such programs: he was by nature too speculative, too emphatic, and too rocket-like.

Winckelmann and Voltaire

The first attempts really to write cultural history instead of philosophizing over it came from Voltaire and Winckelmann. Winckelmann set himself in his principal work (which is somewhat earlier than Herder's earliest writings) to expound " the origin, growth, change, and decline of Classical art together with the styles of the various nations, times, and artists." He begins with the Orientals, arrives by way of the Etruscans at the Hellenes, discusses their separate art periods, and ends with the Romans, purposely concentrating on " outward conditions " throughout. The whole work is undeniably dogmatic in spirit:

Greek art forms a canon by which all else is one-sidedly judged; but the writer's subtle and acute estimate of the styles of individual peoples and ages, viewed as products of race and place, of their constitution and their literature, was, all the same, an entirely new departure.

Twelve years before Winckelmann's book there appeared Voltaire's *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, which opens with the words: "It is not my intention merely to write the life of Louis XIV. I have a larger object in view. I shall attempt to show to posterity, not the deeds of a single man, but the nature of Man in what, so far, is his most enlightened age." He treats of the entire cultural conditions: home and foreign policy, commerce and industry, administration and justice, the police and the military, confessional disputes and ecclesiastical affairs, science and the fine arts, and public and private life, complete down to anecdotes. The form is still that of separate headings, which have no proper correlation, but there is extraordinarily rich and vivid material. Even today the book has the charm of fascinating actuality, for this amazing writer not only had the supreme gift of making everything he touched crystal-clear and transparent, but could paint in bright colours and sparkle with wit.

Hegel and Comte

On March 26, 1789 Schiller wrote to Körner: "Church history, the history of philosophy, of manners, and of commerce, ought really to be combined in one with political history: only then can we have universal history." But no one in Germany thought in this wise at the time and Schiller's own historical works, which are definitely political in outlook, have still the character of those emotional displays on canvas which are hung on the walls of public buildings for purposes of edification.

More than any other work, Hegel's *Philosophy of History* has enduringly influenced historical literature as a whole — unparalleled as a piece of profound, considered, and synthesizing research into the nature, significance, and spirit of history (and, it may be added, easier to read than most of his books, as comparatively little use is made in it of the obscure post-Kantian terminology). The terse, if arbitrary, manner in which all the world's history, from China's earliest times to the July Revolution, is represented as a strictly ordered succession of ever-mounting steps in actualizing the "consciousness of liberty," and the plastic power with which the dominating ideas of the various ages during their growth, culmination, and decline are worked out makes the work extraordinarily stimulating — and even what is called delightful — to read. Yet it is nothing but a skeleton, animated by a series of pertinent and original *aperçus*.

A similar evolutionary method of treating history, founded on a strictly anti-metaphysical basis, is seen in Comte's *Philosophie positive*. There we have the doctrine of the three stages of humanity, of which the highest, or "positive," is distinguished by the definitive triumph of the scientific outlook over the theological, the industrial mode of life over the military, and the democratic constitution over the despotic.

Buckle

Comte in turn influenced Buckle, whose *History of Civilization in England* excited great attention on its appearance. He writes: "Instead of telling us those things which alone have any value, instead of giving us information respecting the progress of knowledge, and the way in which mankind has been affected by the diffusion of this knowledge, instead of these things, the majority of historians fill their works with the most trifling and miserable details: personal anecdotes of kings and courts; interminable relations of what was said by one minister, and what was thought by another . . . in the study of the history of Man, the important facts have been neglected, and the unimportant ones preserved." According to him, the material development of nations is influenced mainly by climate, food, and soil, because these three conditions govern the distribution of wealth; and the intellectual development is determined by natural phenomena, which either work upon the imagination by their force and grandeur or, in temperate zones, work upon the reason. Out of these factors there arise certain forms of religion, literature, and statesmanship, which foster either superstition or knowledge. Buckle, who died in his forty-first year, never got as far as his real theme. His volumes contain only a sort of prospectus or program-like introduction. The very lucid though by no means illuminating deductions on which the author takes his stand are there set forth with that wearisome breadth which is a feature of so many English books. There is ceaseless repetition, and the sources and quotations almost crowd out the text. Buckle's immense reading unhealthily inflated his work and deprived it of all power of free movement. And not only his work, but he himself appears to have been crushed under it, for, if we may trust his translator, Arnold Ruge, he literally read himself to death. Judging by the author's cast of mind, it is unlikely that the work would have turned out to be a really universal cultural history — the title, indeed, does not claim this — but only a history of the English people's intellectual development as manifested in the progress of scientific research, social welfare, education, business, and technology.

Burckhardt

But almost simultaneously with Buckle's book, there appeared the first volume of a genuine universal history — although far less fuss was made about it at the time — Burckhardt's *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien.* In the introduction to his lectures on the cultural history of Greece he lays down with kindly irony the principles which he followed both in this and in later works: " Why do we not read purely political history, leaving general conditions and forces to be dealt with collaterally in simple appendices? Because — apart from the fact that Greek history has by degrees been admirably covered — practically all our time would go in a mere relation of events, not to speak of the critical examination of them that is expected these days, when we like to fill an octavo volume with a single inquiry into the accuracy of particular external facts. . . . *Our* task, as we see it, is to give the history of Greek *modes of thought and points of view,* and to seek to discover the vital *forces,* both constructive and destructive, which were active in Greek life. . . . Fortunately, not only does the conception of cultural history change, but also academic practice (and not a few other things). . . . Cultural history deals with the inner life of mankind in the past, defining what this was, what it wanted and thought, what was its outlook, and what it was able to do. . . . It presents and emphasizes just those facts which enable us to make a real inward contact of minds, rouse a real sympathy, whether by affinity or contrast with ourselves. The rubbish is thrown aside. . . . We are ' unscientific ' and have no method — or at least not the method of other people."

Jakob Burckhardt realized the dream of Schiller: he actually succeeded in livingly reproducing the great organic unity formed by the sum of a people's vital activities. Never before had one man's brain had at once so fresh an eye for details, so entirely a poet's instinct for visualizing distant conditions, and with these a broad, free glance for the most general linkages in what he saw. An insatiable psychological curiosity, restless and unsettling, directed by an unerring flair for all that was strange and curious, for things most alien and most rare, most vanished and most hidden — this was the central quality of Burckhardt's mind. And to this quality he added a truly Olympian impartiality of judgment, which could smilingly admit the justification of everything because it understood everything. In this connexion it is of importance to remember that he was a Swiss — and who, living in that small mountain crater, that miniature Europe where Germans, French, and Italians live in peace under one common democratic administration, could think otherwise than as a cosmopolitan and a neutral? And yet, as a matter of fact, Burckhardt did but follow the best traditions of German history. Not only Ranke and his pupils, but the Classics too — Kant, Herder, Goethe, Humboldt, Schiller — had this ideal of a world-civic history ever before their eyes. In Burckhardt's *Welthistorische Betrachtungen*, a work of godlike serenity, vision and charm, we find these lines: "The mind has to transmute its recollection of the various earth-stages it has lived through into a possession; that which was once joy and sorrow should now become knowledge." These words might well be taken as the motto of his life-work.

Taine

Radically different from Burckhardt, and yet related to him, is Hippolyte Taine. The fundamental creative passion in Burckhardt was the Germanic love of contemplation; he wished to present nothing but the picture of the life of the past with all its chaotic exuberance and bewildering lack of system. In Taine there prevailed the Latin urgency to dissect, to translate what was seen in the soul into the bright logic of well-built-up architecture. Burckhardt was a descendant of the intellectual sciences: he read history with the eye of a philologist and textual critic; Taine guided himself by the natural sciences: he deciphered history according to the methods of zoölogists and geologists. Common to both, however, was the magic art of revitalizing, the gift of painting the atmosphere, ambiance, and entire spiritual landscape of a human being, a people, or an age. Burckhardt was content to employ a simple, although warm and well-graded, colour-scheme; Taine was equipped with all the technical devices of a refined impressionism.

Taine was one of those great and rare scholars who are a program. One is, therefore, confronted with the choice between rejecting his methods and aims, his demands and conclusions *a limine* and accepting them wholesale. He was, to put it briefly, the first to practise historical research on the lines of natural science, and the first to demonstrate that art and natural science are at bottom the same. And, indeed, there is no difference of principle between them. The artist's view of the world and mankind is that which seeks as far as possible to lose itself in its object, illuminating it not from outside by some light foreign to it, but from within, deriving light from its own core. Observation of the first kind projects its own light *on to* things and can, therefore, only touch their surface; all it does is to render its objects visible. That of the second kind projects light *into* things and makes objects luminous in themselves. A similar through-lighting of people and things is the aim of the nature-student in the same degree as the historian and of the historian in the same degree as the artist.

For what does it mean to think historically? To see the inward linkages of a thing, to understand a thing, and to expound it to others out of its own spirit and meaning. The nature-historian is a real historian, he inquires into the *conditions*. He also inquires into the *achievements*, but these to him are no more than the sum of the conditions which he can *calculate*. He inquires into energy-relations. He inquires into the aim. But the aim is to him only the piling-up and passing-on of energies. Should a new variety occur, he feels it his duty — and fulfils that duty — to describe it with the utmost accuracy and completeness. Has the particular plant stony soil, marshy soil, or a water bed? Is it a hanging, a climbing, or an upright plant? Is it an alkaline, silicious, or calcareous plant? How does it absorb light, generate heat?

But a historical phenomenon, too — whether we take an individual fertile personality, a particular generation, or a whole race — is nothing but a new variety. In what climate, what air and stratum of soil does it live? What is its station, its locality like? What are the conditions governing its intake and handling of material? What, morphologically, is its basic structure? How does it absorb light, generate heat? What is its purpose? What energies does it release? This, or something like it, was Taine's attitude towards history. And these observations and inquiries, belittled and challenged on all sides, he knew how to clothe in the marvellously rich brocade of a prose which shimmered with a thousand opaline tints, a prose unrivalled even in French literature.

Lamprecht

About a generation ago Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte* began to appear. It is in many respects a most meritorious work, particularly as regards its excellent lay-out. The author exhibits the course of cultural history as occurring within the framework of a definite and ever-reciprocating mechanism: " Development of reactions against existing conditions, overthrow of the old dominants, a new naturalism, the setting-up of new dominants in an increasingly objective idealism, rationalization of these dominants, the after-cult of them, then new stimulating processes again, and so on." More exactly, Lamprecht distinguishes five ages of culture: the symbolic, the typical, the conventional, the individual, and the subjective. These again he divides broadly into the period of receptivity and the period of irritability. In each of these ages one particular " social-psychical collective disposition " prevails, labelled by Lamprecht with the heavy loan-word " diapason." He has undeniably been very successful in demonstrating the workings of this " diapason " in all branches of culture, although to some extent hampered by his deliberately restricting himself to German history. This mode of treatment was quite admissible in dealing with the Middle Ages, when an international culture ruled; a description of cultural France in the twelfth century, for instance, is essentially a description of general European culture. But in modern times it is first one nation, then another, which leads: in the Renaissance, the Italians; in the Baroque, the Spaniards; in the eighteenth century, the French; in the ninetenth, the Germans and English alternately and again the French; and at the close of the century even the group of the little Scandinavian nations.

It is nevertheless possible to exemplify the development of European culture as a whole, even from a single nation, particularly when, as with Lamprecht, ample provision is made for any important incursion of foreign influences. A more serious objection is Lamprecht's lack of creative power, both in classification and in description. His ground-plan was comprehensible enough, but in carrying it out he smudged the outline and failed to integrate his composition. He was too scrupulous as a scholar to accept the necessity, implicit in his new outlook, of autocratically (and on occasion forcibly) lumping together or tearing apart his materials — a method which science would not have justified, but art should have enjoined on him. Even in describing the individual culture-generations he produces no real synopsis, in spite of the breadth and fertility of his ideas. Added to that, his book is written in that awkward, unmusical jargon peculiar to most German scholars, which moved Goethe to say that Germans had the gift of making science inaccessible. Frequent lapses into the emotionalism of an antiquated Old Frankish text-book do not make it pleasanter reading; for passion is the worst — because the most obvious — of all snares to writers of every description. It can only be permitted to the greatest artists, such as Victor Hugo and Wagner, Sonnenthal and Coquelin, Nietzsche and Carlyle. Nevertheless, in spite of all these flaws, Lamprecht's fourteen volumes do in a way mark an epoch in the history of cultural history.

Breysig

From Lamprecht we pass naturally to Kurt Breysig, an excellent scholar, independent in his conception, of acute judgment and wide outlook. He breaks completely with the traditional principle of guiding history into Classical, Mediæval, Modern, and finds that this succession applies not to the general course of world-history, but to the great single cultural groups, in particular the Greek, the Roman, and the Germano-Roman. Thus ancient Greece (1500–1000 B.C.) would correspond to the Germanic period (A.D. 400–900.) " In both cases," he writes, " a people that is still barbaric is helped by borrowing in various ways from older, wealthier civilizations, oriental and Roman respectively; in both cases a strong monarchy has exercised a powerful influence. . . . The ruins of the royal castles and tombs of Mycenæ and Tiryns and those of the Carolingian palace at Aachen are imbued with the same spirit." Then followed the " early Mediæval period," lasting with the Greeks from 1000 to 750 B.C., and with the Germans from A.D. 900 to 1150. Here in both cases we have " the throne in conflict with a pushing aristocracy, which finally gains the upper hand; after which there arises a citizen administration controlled by money. Next come the stirrings of democracy, and lastly there is a revival of the monarchic idea . . . and with it, as its most important element, the socially unitary character of the epoch, which in both cases is essentially ruled by the idea of solidarity, in spite of the parallel existence of a brusque, tumultuous individualism of strong personalities." These extracts suffice to show how fruitful a comparative method may prove to be, if handled with judgment and a lively feeling for the concrete, and if care is taken not to overlook the differences in establishing the analogies. It must be admitted that Breysig's "cultural history of modern times" hardly fulfils the promise of its title so far. The first volume treats of "problems and standards in the writing of general history"; the second, with "antiquity and Middle Age as steps leading to the modern," the first half being devoted to prehistory and Greek and Roman history, the second to the rise of Christianity and the antiquity and early Middle Age of the Germano-Roman peoples. Breysig is far more exact and penetrating in his analysis than Lamprecht and has also the advantage of a terse, vivid, well-rounded style. The tightly packed chapters on the art and world-outlook of the Greeks and Roman government and society are masterly, a fact which is obviously due to his not being a specialist in that sphere. In fact, the nearer he approaches his own special domain, the more he loses his breath. Social history in particular looms overlarge in his survey of the early Middle Age of the Germano-Roman culture. Nearly five hundred pages are given up to territorial development, the growth of the classes, and political economy, and but eighty pages to religion, science, literature, and the arts. When we consider the oppressive mass of detail there is in this single section — and that purporting to be only the prologue — it is impossible to imagine the formidable dimensions that the work will have assumed by the time it arrives at its real theme. Indeed, as he has published no volumes since 1902,[1] it almost looks as if the author himself had been daunted by his glimpse into these endless spaces. If this be so, it is much to be regretted.

Spengler

Lastly, and with deep admiration, we come to the name of Oswald Spengler, perhaps the most powerful and vivid thinker to appear on German soil since Nietzsche. One has to climb very high in the world's literature to find works of such scintillating and exuberant intellect, such triumphant psychological vision, and such a personal and suggestive, rhythmic cadence as his

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[1] A further instalment appeared in 1928. *Tr.*

Decline of the West. What Spengler gives us in his two volumes is the "outlines of a morphology of history." He sees, in place of the "monotonous picture of a linear world-history" the "phenomenon of a plurality of mighty Cultures." "Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression, which arise, ripen, decay, and never return. There is not *one* sculpture, *one* painting, *one* mathematic, *one* physics, but many, each in its deepest essence different from the others, each limited in duration and self-contained, just as each species of plant has its peculiar blossom or fruit, its special type of growth and decline. These Cultures, sublimated life-essences, grow with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field." Cultures are organisms, and cultural history is their biography. Spengler establishes nine such Cultures, the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Indian, the Chinese, the Classical, the Arabian, the Mexican, the Western, and the Russian, and he throws light upon each in turn, naturally not an equally bright and full light in every case, as, of course, our information concerning them is very unequal. But in the evolutionary course of these Cultures certain parallelisms rule, and this leads Spengler to introduce the conception of "contemporary" phenomena, by which he understands historical facts that, "each in its own Culture, occur in the same — relative — positions and, therefore, have an exactly corresponding significance." "Contemporary," for example, are the rise of the Ionic and that of the Baroque; Polygnotus and Rembrandt, Polycletus and Bach, Socrates and Voltaire are "contemporaries." But within the individual Culture itself, too, there is naturally complete congruence of all its life-expressions at each of its stages of evolution. So, for instance, there is a deep connexion of form between the Differential Calculus and the dynastic state principle of Louis XIV, between the Classical Polis and the Euclidean geometry, between the space-perspective of the Western oil-painting and the conquest of space by railways, telephones, and long-range weapons. By means of these and like guiding principles, now Spengler arrives at the most interesting and surprising discoveries. The "Protestant brown" of the Dutch and the atheistic *plein air* of the Manet school, the "Way" as prime symbol of the Egyptian Soul, and the "Plain" as the leitmotiv of the Russian world-outlook, the "Magian" Culture of the Arabs and the "Faustian" Culture of the West, the "second religiousness" in which late Cultures revive the images of their youth, and the "fellahdom" in which man becomes again historyless — these, and many more like them, are unforgettable glimpses of genius that light up for a moment vast tracts of night, incomparable discoveries and hits of an intellect that possesses a truly creative eye for analogies. That the Cimmerians of learning have opposed to such a work nothing but stolidity and a deaf incomprehension of what his questions and answers are about is not surprising to anyone who knows the customs and mentality of the republic of scholarship.

History in a late period

The writing of cultural history is itself a cultural-historical phenomenon which has to go through the individual life-phases established by Spengler: childhood, youth, maturity, and old age. In childhood man lives like a vegetable, thinks only of himself and the nearest objects; and in that stage he does not yet write any history at all; in youth he sees the world as a poet, and his conception of history, therefore, takes the form of a poem; in the maturity of manhood he regards action as the aim and significance of existence, and he writes political history; in old age he at last begins to understand, but only in a weary, resigned manner. And Spengler's work constitutes by its very existence the most impressive proof of the rightness of his construction of history. The ultimate aim of Western evolution, as Spengler sees it, is the nervous, disciplined mentality of civilized man, the illusionless factual philosophy, scepticism and historicism of the cosmopolitan — is, in a word, *Spengler*. By this no malice or double meaning is intended. It has been from all time the prerogative of thinkers to prove themselves, and the greater the thinker, the better founded, more obvious, and inescapable is this prerogative.

But: — Spengler is the product of his age precisely in that he is an atheist, agnostic, and materialist in disguise. He takes his stand on biology, experimental psychology, the more subtle statistics, and even mechanics. He does not believe in a *meaning* of the universe, in the inherent divinity. *The Decline of the West* is the fascinating fiction of a civilized thinker who is no longer *capable* of believing it possible to soar. Spengler is the last and finest and most spiritualized heir of the technical age, and at bottom the most brilliant pupil of Darwin and the English sensualism, even in his very inversions of these doctrines — indeed it is in these very inversions that his origins perhaps disclose themselves most surely. That is why only his historical conclusions are absolutely compelling, and not by any means his philosophical. When, for instance, we read on the last page of his work: "It is Time whose inexorable movement embeds the ephemeral incident of the Culture, on this planet, in the incident of Man — a form wherein the incident life flows on for a time," his assertions are true and yet not true: true, that is, as vital manifestations of a definite historical variety of man, that of today, of which Spengler himself is an example, and one of the most shining; and neither more nor less true than fetishism in primitive peoples, or the Ptolemaic world-system of the Classical age.

Fruitful new ideas never come from an individual, but from the age. It is the very touchstone of its value that such ideas occur simultaneously to many people. Spengler recognizes this too when he says in his preface: "An idea that is historically essential — that does not occur within an epoch, but itself makes that epoch — is only in a limited sense the property of him to whose lot it falls to patent it. It belongs to the time as a whole and influences all thinkers without their knowing it." And, in fact, there appeared almost on the same day as Spengler's first volume a remarkable book by the Swiss writer C. H. Meray, which started from the basis that every civilization was a self-contained whole, a living thing similar to the multicellular organisms. We even find there the proposition: "so many religions, so many civilizations." The religions are said to be, as it were, the nerve-centres of individual cultures, the vital activity of which they unify and regulate. Further, every civilization has its own style; this too has its parallel phenomenon in the world of cells, where the protoplasm has likewise a specific constitution — its chemical structure — by which the genus of each individual living organism can be instantly determined. In the case of all these civilizations, now, the observer will find that after a certain time — that is, after about two to three thousand years — they die. The Egyptian, the Sumerian, the Babylonian, the Mycenæan, and the recently discovered Minoan: all these high and very individual cultures failed to pass this span. Civilizations have, therefore, just like organisms, a definite length of life, which may doubtless be curtailed through violent attacks from outside, but can in no case be extended. In such a condition of decline our present culture now finds itself. With the help of what we may call this cultural-physiological method, the author, in the beginning of 1918, undertook not only to explain the causes and course of the World War up to date, but also to foretell its end and consequences — which he did with complete success.

Naturally Spengler did not draw purely on the consciousness of the age, but made use of his forerunners: Hegel, Nietzsche, Taine, Lamprecht, and Breysig. The writer of the present work feels justified in doing the same, but with this difference — that he is in the enviable position of being able to make use of Spengler as well.

Pro domo

And so, in the course of our historical sketch, we arrive at the latest attempt at cultural history — namely, our own. On this a few brief general remarks will perhaps be permitted here.

In Germany, when a writer desires to say anything publicly, distrust is immediately aroused in various directions. First, has this man the right, anyhow, to contribute to the discussion? Then, is he competent to do so? Next, do not his statements contain contradictions and discrepancies, and, finally, has no one else said it all before him? To put it in three words, he is charged with *dilettantism*, *paradox*, and *plagiarism*.

The professional dilettante

As regards dilettantism, it should be borne in mind that vital energy dwells in any activities only so long as they are practised by amateurs. It is the amateur, happily so named, who alone stands in a really human relation to his objects; only in amateurs do the man and his professions coincide. That is why an amateur can pour his own self into his activity, saturating it with the essence of his being; whereas things which are practised as a profession have invariably a touch of the worst sort of lovingness, whether it takes the form of a particular one-sidedness or limitation, of subjectivity or narrowness of outlook. The expert is too tightly wedged into his professional circle and is almost never in a position to bring about a real revolution. He has grown up with tradition and respects it in spite of himself. Also he knows too much of the detail of his subject to see things simply enough, and, losing that, he loses the first essential of intellectual fertility. Thus the whole history of the sciences affords a continuous example of the value of dilettantism. The law of the conservation of energy we owe to a brewer named Joule; Fraunhofer was a glass-cutter, Faraday a bookbinder. It was Goethe who discovered the intermaxillary bone, and Parson Mendel the basic law of hybridization. The Duke of Meiningen, a royal amateur "producer," has created a new theatre-style; Priessnitz, a peasant amateur of the art of healing, a new system of therapeutics. These are merely instances taken from the nineteenth century, and only represent a fraction of the cases available.

Productivity presupposes the courage to talk of connexions that are not quite perfectly established, to report on facts not quite accurately observed, to describe events of which nothing quite reliable is known; in short, to say things of which the only thing that can be proved is that they are wrong. Especially does this apply to every sort of productiveness in the fields of philosophy and art, or even remotely connected with them.

Particularly when we come to cultural history will it be found positively impossible to handle the subject except in the amateur spirit. For a historian must obviously choose between two things. Either he must write seriously, authoritatively, and authentically on *one* branch or subject — such as the Württemberg city-feuds in the second half of the fifteenth century, the genealogy of the Ugly Duchess, or, as Dr. Jörgen Tesman, State Research Scholar in Cultural History has done, on the domestic industries of Brabant in the Middle Ages; or he must combine several or all branches for the purpose of comparison, and deal with them in a superficial, inaccurate, and dubious fashion. A universal history can only be compiled out of a vast stock of dilettantish researches, incompetent judgments, and incomplete data.

The inevitable paradox

The question of paradox can be disposed of with equal dispatch. First, it is part of the fate of every so-called "truth" to travel along the path leading from paradox to commonplace, to be absurd yesterday and trivial tomorrow. We are, therefore, confronted with the sad alternative of proclaiming the coming truths and being considered quacks or semi-lunatics, or of repeating the "arrived" truths and writing ourselves down as bores. We have to choose between being a nuisance and being superfluous; there is no third choice.

It should be observed, too, that the greatest men are forced to contradict themselves constantly. They are, after all, forcing-beds for more than *one* truth. Everything living takes root in their soil. That is why the plants which they produce are so varied, and often so contrasted, in type. These souls are too objective, too rich, too well endowed in every way, and too comprehending to have only one opinion about a particular thing. Not only the brain of secular importance, but every thinking person is obliged to contradict himself sometimes. Did not Emerson say: " A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. . . . Speak what you think now in hard words and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today."

Goethe meant the same thing when he told Eckermann that truth was like a diamond, which sends its gleams, not in one direction, but in several at once; and Baudelaire wrote to Philoxène Royer: " Among all these rights we have heard about lately, one has been forgotten: the right to contradict oneself."

But there is more to it than that. Contradiction is, quite simply, the form — the necessary form — in which our whole process of thought is carried on. That which we call the " truth " of a thing is found not in statement A or the contradictory statement non-A, but in a unit which embraces both these conflicting opinions and is in a sense on a higher spiral plane of intellect. The whole history of mankind's spiritual development consists in striving to find the true midway-conception by which two one-sided and therefore false ways of looking at reality can meet and be reconciled. It was, as we know, on the recognition of this that Hegel based his vast system of philosophy, in which he applied his simple and effective scheme of Thesis — Antithesis — Synthesis to anything and everything, and it was the compelling power of this wise and profound discovery which gave the Hegelian system, for half a century, its almost absolute supremacy in every cultural sphere and led all creative intellects — whether physicists or metaphysicians, artists or jurists, court preachers or labour leaders — to speak, so to say, in the Hegelian dialect. The essence of this philosophy may be seen in a more popular but no less pertinent form in the following anecdote told of Ibsen. He was speaking with great enthusiasm of Bismarck at a party, when someone asked him how so fanatical a champion for the freedom of the individual could be so enthusiastic about a man who was a conservative in his whole outlook, an advocate, in fact, of the suppression of other men's individualities. Upon which Ibsen smiled into his interrogator's face and said: " But have you never noticed that every idea, when you have thought it out to the end, becomes its own opposite? "

The legitimate plagiarist

Finally, as to the question of plagiarism, crying out about intellectual borrowings is one of the most superfluous occupations in the world. Every plagiarism is in fact its own punishment. On it rests the curse which turns all stolen goods, whether of the mental or of the physical order, into joyless possessions. It fills the thief with an uncertainty and embarrassment which is visible fifty yards away. Nature countenances no dishonest dealings. It is only our own thoughts that we can really set in motion, because they alone are our *organs*. An idea which belongs, not to us, but to another, we cannot handle; it will throw us as surely as a horse a strange rider; it is like a casket with a puzzle-lock to which one has no clue, or like a passport which opens the door into foreign lands, but only for those whose portrait and signature it bears. Therefore, do not bother if people steal as much intellectual treasure as they can lay hands on, for no one will suffer more for it than they themselves, when they find that they have wasted their precious time on something hopelessly unprofitable to them.

But there are also, of course, unconscious plagiarisms, or, rather, plagiarisms committed with a good conscience, just as one might call any trader a thief with a good conscience. Whether Proudhon's *mot " La propriété c'est le vol "* is precisely correct in the field of economics is doubtful; in the domain of the intellect it undoubtedly is so. For, strictly speaking, the whole of the world's literature consists of plagiarisms. The tracing of sources, said Goethe to Eckermann, was " very absurd." " As well might one inquire of a well-nourished man as to the oxen, sheep, and pigs he had consumed and from which he had drawn his strength. We have our native talents, it is true, but our development we owe to the thousand outer influences of a great world, from which we appropriate what we can and what suits us. . . . The main thing is to have a soul which loves truth and absorbs it where it finds it. In any case the world is now so old, and for millennia so many important persons have lived and thought in it, that there is little that is new to discover or say. Even my colour theory is by no means new. Plato, Leonardo, and many other excellent men have discovered and thought the same in detail before me. Yet the fact that I also discovered it, that I said it over again, and that I strove to gain admittance for truth to a world in confusion — that is *my* merit." And this must have been a very considerable admission on Goethe's part, for we know that there was nothing he was more proud of than his theory of colour.

The whole intellectual history of mankind is a history of thefts. Alexander stole from Philip, Augustine from St. Paul, Giotto from Cimabue, Schiller from Shakspere, Schopenhauer from Kant. And when a period of stagnation sets in, the reason is always that too little is being stolen. In the Middle Ages, thefts were made only from the Christian Fathers and Aristotle: that was not enough. In the Renaissance all the odds and ends of literature were snapped up: hence the tremendous intellectual revival which took hold of European humanity at that time. And when it happens that a great artist or thinker fails in his mission, it is always because he cannot find enough people to rob him. Socrates had the rare good fortune to find in Plato a perfectly unscrupulous thief who knew his trade thoroughly: without Plato he would have remained unknown. The question of priority is of great interest in the case of vacuum cleaners, quick cookers and pocket lighters, but in the sphere of intellect it is of no importance whatever. For, as we have pointed out in the case of Spengler, the good ideas which live and fructify are never hacked out by a single individual, but are always the work of the collective consciousness of a whole epoch. The real point is, who will formulate them most crisply, illumine them most clearly, follow them up in all their possible applications. "At bottom," said Goethe, "we are all collective natures, pose individually as we may. For how little have we, and are we, that we can in the purest sense call our own! . . . I owe my works by no means to my own wisdom alone, but to thousands of things and persons outside myself, who provide me with the material. Fools and wise men, clear and circumscribed thinkers, childhood, youth, and maturity: all these came to me and told me what they were like, what they thought, how they lived and worked, and what store of experience they had, so that all I had to do was to turn to and reap what others had sown for me."

Shakspere, as is well known, copied Plutarch word for word in *Julius Cæsar*. Some regret that there should be this great blemish on this great poet. Others are tolerant and say: a Shakspere may do it. But to both the true reply is that if nothing were known of Shakspere but this, it alone would stamp him as a real poet. It is true, great poets are often original, but only when they are obliged to be. They have never the desire to be original: that is left to literary men. A poet is a person who sees and is able to see — that is all. And he is glad when, once in a way, he can indulge to the full his natural bent: which is to copy. If Shakspere copied out Plutarch, he did it not *although* but *because* he was a poet. Genius has a passionate love for the good and the worthy; it seeks nothing but these. And when another person, say Plutarch, has the truth in him, why move a single step away from him? What might not happen if one did! There would be the danger of setting a truth less great and true in the place of the old one, and this is the danger more dreaded by genius than the loss of its originality. It would sooner copy, sooner be a plagiarist.

Pathological and physiological originality

Pascal says somewhere in his *Pensées:* "Certain writers always speak of their works as '*my* book, *my* commentary, *my* history.' It reminds me of the good citizens who on every occasion say '*my house*.' It would be better if they said: *our* book, *our* commentary, *our* history, when we consider that the good in them comes from others more than from themselves." In sum, we are all only plagiarists of the *Weltgeist*, secretaries who write to its dictation. Some do it better, some worse, and that is the whole difference. But Pascal supplements his remark with another: "Some readers insist that an author should never speak of things of which others have already spoken. If he does so, they reproach him for saying nothing new. In a game of ball one uses the same ball as another; but one of the two *throws* it better. As well reproach an author for using old words: as if the same thought in a different order did not constitute another mental organism, just as words in a changed order constitute other ideas." The fact is that the unoriginality lies mostly in the reader. The remark: "There is nothing to me in that, I have heard it somewhere before" is heard most frequently from the lips of untalented, inartistic, unproductive people. A talented man, on the other hand, realizes that there is nothing he has "heard somewhere before," but that, on the contrary, everything is new. The European supposes all Negroes to have the same face because he does not understand Negro faces. And the Philistine supposes all men to have the same intellectual physiognomy because he does not understand intellectual physiognomies. " Those people who never think for themselves," says Kant in his *Prolegomena,* " have yet the cunning, when something has been shown to them, to spy it out in what has already been said elsewhere, although till then no one has been able to see it there."

Materially nothing is fundamentally new; only the interplay of intellectual forces is ever new. Indeed, we may take the last step and say: everyone in full possession of his faculties is continuously being compelled to plagiarize. The well-ordered, well-refined realm of truth is small; only the wilderness of folly and error, caprice and idiocy, is boundless and bottomless. People who say anything wholly new must be looked upon with suspicion, for that something is practically always a lie. Originality is twofold: it can be good or bad. Every new organism is original, and this *physiological* originality is valuable and fruitful. But side by side with it there exists a *pathological* originality, and that has no value at all and no tenacity at all, although it counts in many quarters as the one and only real originality. It is the originality of the fat boy and double-headed calf of the shows.

Shortly after writing these closing observations, I happened to pick up an old volume of *Die Zeit,* in which I found an essay by Hermann Bahr on " Plagiarisms." The concluding sentence read as follows: " If we deprive the artist of his right to give us beauty as he feels it, regardless of whether it has already been given or not; if we deprive the connoisseur of the right to make for the genuine, whether it be old or new; if, in fact, we accept only those things that have never appeared before, then we are opening the door to every kind of freak, and he who is the biggest fool will become our favourite author." Here is a case of accidental " parallelism," one might think, but it is not so. As a devoted reader of Hermann Bahr from the beginning, I must obviously have read this sentence in the *Zeit* in my school-days, and it has now risen to the surface from my subconsciousness. From which it is clear that one cannot even talk about plagiarizing without plagiarizing.

BOOK I: RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

From the Black Death to the Thirty Years' War

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING

> *"Does not the best everywhere begin with illness?"*
>
> *Novalis*

The will to pigeon-hole

A little reflection shows that all the classifications ever made by man are arbitrary, artificial, and incorrect. But an equally simple reflection shows these same classifications to be useful and indispensable, and indeed unavoidable, because they arise out of an inborn tendency of our mind. For the will to classify is deeply rooted in the human being. He takes a strong and even passionate delight in dividing things up, placing them in compartments, and labelling them. With many children boxes are the favourite toy; but grown-ups too always carry an invisible grid about with them. The simple, lucid arrangement of most of nature's products: the clearly defined segmentation of an animal body, the regular knots of a flower stalk, that are, as it were, the stories of its structure, and the sharp-cut surfaces and angles of the crystal — all these have for us a peculiarly refreshing look. We demand that a poem should have stanzas, a drama acts, a symphony movements, a book sections: without these we feel oddly worried, estranged, and wearied. A face without definitely marked features strikes us as unlovely or meaningless. We esteem people and natures according to their skill in grading, analysing, separating: that which we call art is, indeed, almost identical with the power to do these things. The Greek architects and sculptors have been the teachers of thousands of years because they were masters of classification and *proportion*. Dante's fame as poet rests partly on his having made the mysterious world of the beyond transparent and tangible by defining the circles of which it was composed. And has it not ever been science's sole task to parcel out reality into groups, and by skilful disparting and ranking to enable us to understand and deal with the mass of factual material? We say indeed that Nature makes no leaps. But it would seem that the intermediate forms through which she has to pass do not seem to her of great importance, since she has preserved none of them, but uses them merely as auxiliary lines and temporary bridges to bring her to her actual goal — the sharply distinct groups and kingdoms. Striking contrasts, not smudged transitions, are what she aims at. Or, rather, let us say that this is the only way in which we can see it. In observing a development process, what fascinates and stirs us is always that mysterious *jump*, and it is almost never absent. In every biography it is the sudden illumination and darkenings, transformations and turnings, cuts and changes of accent, that hold our sympathy; that which marks the section, the *epoch*. In short, we only feel comfortable in an articulated, graded, *punctuated* world.

The right to periodize

This applies particularly to everything which runs a course in time. Time is perhaps the most terrible of all the terrors with which mankind is surrounded — transient and uncanny, formless and unfathomable, a point of section between the two threatening uncertainties. There is the past, which no longer is and yet looms oppressively over our Now, and there is the future, which is not yet and nevertheless weighs heavily on our today; but the present we can never grasp. Time, therefore — our noblest and most precious dowry — does not belong to us. We try to possess it and instead are possessed by it, are driven relentlessly on towards a phantom which we call "tomorrow" and yet can never reach. But for that very reason man endlessly strives to divide and apportion time into ever smaller and more exact portions, calling on air, sand, water, light, and all the elements to help him to perform the task better and better. His strongest craving, his perpetual dream, is to bring *chronology* into the world. Once we have made time systematic and comprehensible, measurable and calculable, we delude ourselves into thinking that we control it, that it belongs to us. Even the savage has his rough, simple methods of doing this. Classical man, more earthly and less subtilizing than Christian man, was content with the sun's shadow, but even the Middle Ages were acquainted with clocks and we of today with our never-stilled fear of life and our Faustian restlessness have apparatus to register the four hundred thousandth part of a second. It is just the same if we exchange the time microscope for the time telescope and make a broad survey of our race; we are no longer satisfied with our ancestors' naïve, symbolical division into the golden, the silver, and the iron age; we insist upon more precise, sharper, more comprehensive divisions. It is, of course, easy to indulge in polemics against every kind of periodization: to say, for instance, that everything is one great single river which, like any other river, covers long spaces in its preparatory stages and other long spaces in its development, and, in fact, is without definable limits in either direction; and that we might as well try to cut up the ocean into sections. Yet, do we not in fact do this very thing when we draw our meridians and parallels? We are always being assured that throughout nature and life there are only step-by-step transitions, degrees, and differentials. And we hear these subtle arguments and admit them, but do not believe them. For at the bottom of our thought there is a knowledge that is more positive and original than all scientific cognitions, and this native, wholesome, unswerving knowledge, common to the vulgar and the truly learned, rejects this posthumous wisdom and clings firmly to its postulate that every course should have its beginning and its end, its overture and its finale. If we look at the life of the individual, which is more easily examined than the evolution of the totality, we shall see that blurred transitions are by no means the rule, but rather that the entry into a new period of life takes place with the abruptness of an explosion. Suddenly — "overnight," as people say — puberty or senility is there. It has, naturally, been "prepared," but it becomes actual usually in the form of an astonishing physiological jerk, and it is often also the solution of some profound spiritual experience. Then we say: "Why, you're a man all at once," or (behind his back): "Why, he's become an old man all at once." Wilhelm Fliess, in his interesting book *Der Ablauf des Lebens* says: "Suddenness is proper to all life's processes. It is fundamental. . . . The child is suddenly in possession of a new articulation. . . . Equally certain it is that the child suddenly begins to walk." Man grows mysteriously in the womb, becoming worm, fish, reptile, and mammal in turn; yet every one of us has his definite birthday, even his birth-minute. And so we may say of the history of our race that there are definite points in time at which a new kind of man is born, only these points will not be days, but possibly years or even decades.

The conception of the new man

But if we pursue this analogy somewhat more closely, we at once see a point where need for a correction presents itself. When does a human life "begin"? Obviously not at the moment of birth, but at the moment of conception. In the marvellous and illuminating investigations into the mysterious phenomenon of periodicity which have been undertaken during the last decades in connexion with Fliess's work, calculations are always based on a point about nine months before the date of birth. Astrologers did the same in casting a horoscope of birth. The beginning of a new section in history should, therefore, be set at that point in time when the new man is *conceived,* using the word in its double sense. A new era does not start with the beginning or the end of a big war, a powerful political upheaval, or an important redistribution of territory; it is born at the moment when a new variety of the human race appears on the scene. For in history it is only the inner experiences of mankind which count. At the same time, the immediate impulse may often arise out of some overwhelming external event, some general catastrophe, a profound readjustment of the social stratification, extensive invasions, or sudden economic crises. As a rule, then, the beginning is made by some great trauma, some shock — for example, the Doric invasion, the Great Migration of the peoples, the French Revolution, the Thirty Years' War, the World War. This is followed by a *traumatic neurosis,* which really constitutes the incubator of the new being. By it everything is thrown about and broken down into a labile, anarchic, chaotic condition; mental and spiritual standards are shaken up and, so to say, mobilized. Only later does the "psychomotor superstructure," as the psychiatrists call it — namely, the system of cerebral regulations, checks, and safeguards by which the normal course of the soul's functions is guaranteed — begin to take shape: all "classicisms" belong in this group of epochs.

Working on this scheme now, we propose to risk the assertion that the year 1348, that of the Black Death, was the year in which modern man was conceived.

The "transitional period"

Modern times do not, therefore, begin where the schools would have them begin. There has indeed always been a dim suspicion that the traditional dates fixed for this begining only very summarily and superficially express the real content of the facts. Most historians help themselves out with a "transition period," by which they mean in a general way the fifteenth century. Breysig introduces the idea of a "late Middle Age," which he dates as "the time between about 1300 and about 1500." Houston Chamberlain goes further back in his clever if rather one-sided *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. For him the "pivot" of European history is the awakening of the Germans to their world-historical mission as founders of an entirely new civilization and an entirely new culture; and the year 1200 is the mean moment of this awakening. Scherer, it is true, adheres to a "declining" Middle Age, yet he opens his chapter on that period with the words: "The Flagellants and the first German university stand significantly at the entrance of a three-hundred-year epoch which lasts until the Peace of Westphalia." It is only natural, however, that the obvious necessity of recognizing an earlier beginning for modern times should have dawned much sooner on the "laity" than on the experts. Even Vasari placed the Rinascita at the beginning of the Trecento. Gustav Freytag writes in his *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*, which remains to this day the most vivid, impressive, and convincing cultural history of the German people: "On closer examination we see that silent forces had long been actively preparing these great events . . . which determined the fate not only of the Germans, but of all the nations on earth. . . . From this point of view the time between the Hohenstaufen and the Thirty Years' War, the four hundred years between 1254 and 1648, appears as a uniform, self-contained period in German history, which stands out sharply against the periods that preceded and followed." And Fritz Mauthner, too, in his *Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendland*, arrives at this formula: "If by the Middle Ages we understand all the centuries in which ecclesiastical conceptions were still operative . . . then the period lasted until the Peace of Westphalia . . . but if we understand it as meaning only those centuries in which theocracy reigned undisputed . . . these Middle Ages would have to stop long before the end of the fifteenth century — about two hundred years earlier."

We see, then, that the new age entered the world at the opening of the sixteenth century, but that it came into being in the fourteenth and fifteenth. And, further, it came into being through disease. This apparently paradoxical explanation — that disease is something productive — must, therefore, have first place in our investigations.

Beginning of the excursus on the value of sickness

All disease is a functional disturbance within the organism. But only a very superficial method of study would content itself with lumping the notions of functional disturbance and of injury together. Even from the history of political and social life, of art, of science, and of religious belief, it must be obvious that the overthrow of the existing equilibrium is certainly not always to be classed among pernicious phenomena; rather is it clear that a new idea, if it is to bear fruit, or a new form, if it is to be beneficial, can only fulfil itself by way of a catastrophe, through some disintegration of the parts and displacement of the existing parallelogram of forces. And, from a conservative standpoint, such a condition must invariably appear one of sickness. An inkling that disease is closely bound up with the mystery of "becoming" has been widespread in the humanity of every age. Popular instinct has always regarded sick people, particularly the mentally sick, with a certain reserve, compounded of fear and respect. The Romans called epilepsy "*morbus sacer, morbus divinus*"; the Pythia, who was entrusted with the solution of Greece's most important problems and with the divination of the future, would seem, judging by what we know of her, to have been what today we should call a hysterical medium. The high value that is placed on suffering in so many religions has its roots in the conviction that it raises rather than lowers the vital functions and leads to a knowledge from which the healthy are debarred. Asceticism is, in both its oriental and its Western manifestations, an attempt — by every imaginable "weakening" device such as under-nourishment, insomnia, flagellation, solitude, and sexual abstinence — to make the organism artificially morbid and thereby to translate it into a higher state. In legend almost all the saints and the like who are distinguished in some way by God show bodily inferiorities. It is only another aspect of this conception that earlier centuries tended to regard hysterical women as witches, as the elect of God's great enemy, whom the belief of that day credited with almost as great a power as the Creator's. In short, we meet everywhere the more or less definite feeling that a sick man is constitutionally more blessed, more enlightened, more pregnant with life, that he represents a higher form of life than his healthy fellows.

The healthiest being is the amœba

It must, of course, be clear to even the most philistine mind that every human being *learns* through the condition of illness. The diseased organism is more restless and therefore more desirous of learning; more sensitive and therefore more capable of learning; more precariously situated and therefore more alert, sensing and hearing more acutely; living permanently in familiarity with the neighbourhood of danger and therefore bolder, more regardless, more enterprising; nearer to the threshhold of the other world and its spiritual state and therefore more incorporeal, transcendent, and spiritualized. After all, generally speaking, every step in the direction of spiritualization represents at bottom a phenomenon of illness, the last means of self-preservation, provided by nature when the physique is exhausted. Higher things are, therefore, invariably less healthy things. The very complication of an organism, if very high, involves a liability to constant disturbance of equilibrium, or at the very least to the danger of such disturbance, and hence insecurity, disequilibrium, lability. " Healthiest " of all is undoubtedly the amœba.

All that is becoming is decadent

Wherever something new is being formed, there is weakness, sickness, and " decadence." Wherever new germs are developing, there is an apparent condition of reduced vitality, as in pregnant women, children cutting teeth, or moulting canaries. In spring all nature is in a sort of neurasthenia. Pithecanthropus was certainly a decadent. The disease commonly known as nervousness is in fact nothing but enhanced susceptibility to irritants, and increased rapidity of reaction, richer and bolder power of association: in a word, spirit. The more highly developed an organism, the more nervous it is. The white man is more nervous than the Negro, the townsman than the countryman, modern man than mediæval man, the poet than the Philistine. In the animal world there is the same relativity: a sportsman's dog is more nervous than a butcher's dog, and a butcher's dog than a bullock. Hystericals have so much power of spirit that they can control matter. On their own bodies they are able to produce at will swellings, hæmorrhages, stigmata, and even trances, and have frequently been found to have second sight. On a smaller scale all this repeats itself in the neurasthenic, with his acuteness of vision. In his case it is simply that his senses are less dormant, making him keener, more easily moved and stirred and more curious. All the current definitions of neurasthenia are nothing but ugly circumlocutions for the physiological states of talent.

The convalescent feels his condition as one of curious buoyancy and exaltation, in comparison with which full return to health appears as a set-back. This is because every illness represents a heroic struggle for existence, a final desperate exertion of strength, which is the threatened organism's reply to insults and invasions from without. The body is then in an exceptional warlike condition, a state of general insurrection in which the individual cells rise to feats of energy, intensifications of vitality, controls of reserves and reactions of which they could never have been supposed capable.

It is not surprising that the problem of the value of illness has roused the attention of some of our most intensive modern thinkers. Hebbel noted in his *Diaries:* " The states of illness are in fact nearer to the true (the durable-eternal) than those of so-called health." Novalis asserts that illnesses probably form " the most interesting stimulant and material for our reflectiveness and our activity " if only we possessed the art of using them, and he asks: " Might not illness be a means of obtaining a higher synthesis? " And Nietzsche, the passionate opponent of modern decadence, has nevertheless stressed in many passages the great importance of disease in mental self-discipline. In the preface to *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* he even arrives at this conclusion: " As regards illness, are we not almost tempted to ask whether we could possibly do without it? "

Higher value of organs in lowered condition

Alfred Adler, in his *Studie über Minderwertigkeit von Organen,* was the first to handle this question in a strictly scientific manner. When this brief work appeared, in 1907, it remained practically unnoticed and it was later, and chiefly through his psychoanalytical investigations, that the author became widely known. These did not, as is generally assumed, combat Freud's doctrine, but were much more in the nature of a supplement to it — which shows that it would indeed be a good thing if we indulged less in amateurish and fruitless polemics and took to heart Goethe's remark apropos his relation to Schiller: that people ought to be " glad there were a couple of fellows worth quarrelling over."

Adler starts from the experimental basis that, in the human organism, all inferior material has a tendency to develop an " excess value " — that is, to react with increased productivity to the relatively stronger vital stimulants to which it is exposed — hence the frequency with which we find that *loci minoris resistentiæ* develop an abnormal efficiency. The cause is found in the compulsion of constant practice and the heightened adaptability which not seldom distinguished organs in lowered condition. The result of hereditary inferiority of organs may be traced to motor insufficiency, inadequate production of the appropriate gland secretions, or poor development of reflexes; but equally also to exaggerated stimulus, hypersecretions, and high development of the reflexes.

This in brief constitutes Adler's discovery. If we think it over a little and try to draw some simple conclusions from it, we shall arrive at very surprising results. Let us begin with inorganic nature. Here we find the simplest, most elementary expression of the facts in the law of action and reaction. If, for instance, I hit a billiard ball with the help of a second ball, it by no means remains passive, but hits back — and with the same amount of force as that with which it is struck. The stimulus of the knock, the shock, releases productive energies within the ball itself. Springs which are not stretched lose their elasticity gradually. A horseshoe magnet increases its magnetism, the longer it is made to pull its armature. Rubber falls to pieces if it is not stretched — atrophies for lack of stimuli. Organic matter, too, naturally obeys the same principle. A muscle which is not used will gradually degenerate. This phenomenon, which may be observed in every serious bone fracture, is known as the atrophy of inactivity. Conversely an organ is hypertrophied when it is under especially heavy demands. A smith, a porter, or a wrestler betrays his occupation at sight by the abnormal development of his arm muscles. It is the property, therefore, of a stimulus that it has a nourishing effect, and the more powerfully and regularly an organ is stimulated, the greater will be its capacity.

Health is, therefore, a metabolism-sickness

We thus arrive at the important conclusion that a diseased organ has in certain circumstances more vitality, more capacity, and more power of development than a sound one, because a disproportionately large number of stimuli tell upon it, disease playing in these cases precisely the same part as special training in a normal organism. This is true not only of individual organs, but also of the organism as a whole. Take for example the fact, which we find so amazing, that artists of all sorts, and particularly actors, remain youthful for so long and in many cases attain a grand old age. The explanation is that they live in an almost permanent condition of abnormal stimulation and excitement. The average person, on the contrary, although he may live far more rationally and respectably, succumbs more easily to the natural process of involution and, on account of the more rigid and stable system which he represents, is much more exposed to general and local calcifiation. In his economy of forces, there is not enough business; he lacks the contacts, opposition, and polarities which are so beneficial; the life of his cell-state wants the due tonics. So much so, in fact, that one might almost make the paradoxical statement that health is a disease of metabolism.

The Lernæan Hydra

Our theory finds a surprising amount of support in the subhuman world, where one can observe far more closely. I will mention only one or two facts, against which I stumbled quite by chance — systematic inquiry would undoubtedly produce many more. The lizard, as is well known, is able to grow a new piece of tail where the first is broken off; and it is stated that this regenerated piece is often thicker and stronger than the original tail. A species of fresh-water polypus, which thrives in our own region, has the peculiarity that when its head is cut off, it replaces it promptly by two new ones. It is accordingly called a hydra in memory of the Lernæan Hydra, which like so many other " sagas " is thus found to possess a deep scientific meaning. One species of water worms native to our brooks can even be induced to form several new heads and tail-tips when incisions are made, and it is well known that earthworms and other low forms of animal life may be cut into numerous pieces and yet emerge again as complete specimens. This property has even been turned to economic account, as in the artificial multiplication of sponges. In such instances, the wounding leads to the production of new individuals, for which otherwise sexual propagation is necessary. On some ferns curious sprouts are formed by infection from parasitic fungi, such as the " witches' brooms " on bracken. Again, those flowers of the lychnis which have become unisexual through the stunted growth of the filaments, are rendered bisexual again by a parasitic fungus which infects them. In the case of trees, every description of injury — worm-eating, damage by wind, or sawing of branches — may result in the production of new buds. The growth of gall-nuts is due to the poisonous activity of certain insects — flies, midges, and wasps — yet it is at least questionable whether these products should be regarded as diseased difformities, since they have morphologically a great resemblance to fruit and do not hinder the tree from flourishing. There are even certain mites which generate double flowers on certain varieties of valerian. All this helps us to understand that remarkable incident in the life of Grétry, father of comic opera, who began to compose from the day when a heavy beam fell on his head, and went on to write fifty operas; also the fact that Mabillon, the creator of the science of palæography, was turned into the great scholar that he was by a wound in the head.

But that the like occurs in the most elementary of life's formations is shown, and amazingly shown, in Ehrlich's theory of side-chains. As is well known, he assumes that in the cell there exist so-called side-chains whose normal function it is to take up the elements of nourishment from the blood circulation and carry them into the interior of the cell. These he calls " receptors," and according to his view the process of infection is due to the poisons' having a greater capacity for becoming incorporated with such receptors. They thereby block the way for the nourishing elements and bring about the death of the individual, unless the cell succeeds in getting rid of these combinations of receptors and poison molecules, and forming new receptors. But, curiously enough, when this happens, the cell not only replaces the original receptors, but creates a considerable *surplus* in addition.

The intimate connexion between wounding and new formation, and the fact that wounding is the only physiological agent which is able to take over the rôle of propagation, brings us to the question whether bisexuality — that is, sexuality — is not a morbid phenomenon of degeneration which appeared in organisms some time or other in the earth's history. The fact that the American chemist Jacques Loeb has succeeded in fertilizing sea-urchins' eggs by a concentrated salt-water solution makes it at least theoretically possible that there have been, or in other heavenly bodies still are, forms of propagation which dispense with the aid of sexuality.

The Achilles out of the heel

"Stimulus" is not, however, the sole reason for the higher development of a deficient organ. There is the further fact that the organ in question receives greater attention and is more carefully handled, its very backwardness making it, so to say, the mother's darling of the organism. Hence it is that, in the human race, native talents are not always congruent with later developments; rather do we find, and frequently, an original imperfection gradually transformed into a perfection. Here also we have to do with a plain phenomenon of reaction. Adler himself drew attention to the case of Demosthenes, who had a stammer from birth, and there are many other cases where a physiological defect has proved a spur to extraordinary achievements in later life. Leonardo and Holbein, Menzel and Lenbach, were all left-handed. The great actors of the Burgtheater in the Vienna of Laube's day — a model of full, personal, suggestive acting still unsurpassed — had every one of them some defect of speech. Actors with so-called brilliant equipment, on the other hand, rarely produce anything of outstanding size and calibre. Connected with this, probably, is the odd though undeniable fact that great dramatic talent expresses itself most convincingly when it is employed in incarnating qualities that are supplementary to the actor's normal mentality. A man who is shy and awkward in private life will be at his best as a confident and elegant drawing-room lion. Or he may be taciturn and morose at home and yet develop sparkling repartee and gaiety on the stage. If he is flabby and lacking in energy in everyday life, his best parts will be steely, domineering, vigorous ones. Charlotte Wolter, the most powerful heroine of the last fifty years, was barely of medium height, and so too was Matkovsky, one of the most convincing impersonators of figures larger than life: when they stood on the stage, no one noticed their low stature. Heroes of real life are sometimes found to have a similar disproportion. The two mightiest warriors of early mid-European history, Attila and Charlemagne, were thickset and undersized; and the two greatest battle-leaders of modern times, Frederick the Great and Napoleon, were also small and unimpressive in build. In such cases an enormous mental vigour and all-powerful will created an effect of contrast out of unfavourable bodily conditions — indeed, it was perhaps these conditions that originally set them alight. We are also told of the famous *amoureuses* — Laïs, Ninon, Phryne, the Pompadour, and others — that they were not actually beautiful, but possessed a " certain something " which brought everyone under their spell. This " certain something " was their charm, their amiability, their dazzling wit, or some inward beauty which their lack of outward beauty led them to develop. As a contrast, one frequently hears the perfect beauty described as insipid and incapable of casting a permanent spell. Too little stimulus is received from outside, for the whole world worships her, blind and unresisting, so that she has no incentive to develop charm by her own efforts. It is almost otiose to recall that Michelangelo, the supreme sovereign of the realm of beauty, was repulsively ugly; that Lord Byron, ardent worshipper and unrivalled depictor of the perfect form, was lame from birth; that Lichtenberg, Germany's most convincing and natural stylist, whose sentences are as illuminating and as straight as candles, and Kant, the world's wonder in logical, vertical, rectilineal thinking, both suffered from spinal curvature; that Schubert, who released a whole world of poetry in sound, was a fat, short-legged plebeian, whom the girls would not look at. There is a deep symbolism, too, in the fact that the greatest musician of the modern age was deaf. The Greeks must have had an inkling of this, for they always conceived of the seer as blind. Homer, too, with his wide-seeing, sun-intoxicated, colour-sensitive world-eye was blind. And Achilles, the invincible, the invulnerable, had his heel, waiting for the deadly arrow. One might say that in this legend the Greek spirit intended a poetical expression of the fact that in even the most victorious enterprise there lurks the drop of poison. But what if it were the other way round — not that every Achilles has his heel, but that every heel has its Achilles? What if the vulnerable spot, the consciousness of its vulnerability, and the dogged, heroic struggle against it causes a hero to be born? A less logical conclusion, but possibly on that very account a truer.

The survival of the unfit

All this leads to an entirely new attitude towards *Darwinism*. Darwin, as is well known, based his conclusions on the two principles of heredity and adaptation. As regards heredity, it is easy to see that inferiorities are particularly easily transmitted, and variability is undoubtedly an unhealthy property. The biologist

Eimer pointed out in his studies on the appearance of new characters (in the lizard) that these always mean, in the first place, disease. The botanist de Vries, author of the theory of mutation, also emphasizes the weakness that new varieties are normally weaker than the original forms; they are often remarkably small, extremely sensitive to certain soil diseases, short-stemmed, destitute of lively colour, and with wavy or broken leaves. The seed-bud does not develop and any rough treatment will cause the blooms to drop off. This should not in the least astonish us; for, firstly, every new character causes an upheaval in the existing economy of the organism and creates an unusual, unconsolidated, and unguaranteed condition; and, secondly, every variation presupposes decadence. The sense-organs of living creatures are, after all, but so many forms by which they respond to the stimuli of the outer world. The rise of new characteristics is, therefore, caused by an enhanced irritability, somewhat like the "irritable weakness" of the psychiatrists. At the moment when at some spot in the live substance a morbid susceptibility to light appeared for the first time, there came into being the first "pigment spot" and therewith the beginnings of the means of sight. The more decadent the outer skin of an organism, the finer a sense of touch and temperature will it develop. And if we were sufficiently susceptible to electric oscillations, we should by this time possess an organ as receptive as a Marconi apparatus. It could only have been a thoroughly degenerate monkey which first conceived the idea of walking upright instead of continuing to go comfortably on all fours; and only quite second-class ape-men, who obviously lacked the power and enterprise to make themselves effectively understood by a system of vigorous and threatening gestures, could have resorted to the substitute of speaking in sounds. Every point of difference between man and his brute ancestry may be put down to the circumstance of man's being nature's stepchild and equipped with very inadequate physical weapons; for this led him to create for himself the weapon of reason, by which he recalls the past and plans out the future. He discovered science, which brings light and order into existence; art, which consoles him for the ugliness and hostility of reality; philosophy, which gives a meaning to his sorrows and disappointments — all products of decadence!

"Normal" organisms and their organs have a more Philistine or conservative reaction on the stimuli of the outer world. They respond conventionally. The receiving gear of the new variety, on the contrary, functions in a more original, revolutionary, "characterless," *adaptable* manner; and their finer receptivity of nuances of stimulus causes them to give them more individual response. New varieties are nothing more than old ones which can no longer support life under existing conditions; in the struggle for existence it is not the "fittest"— that is, the dullest, most brutal, and least intelligent organisms — which survive, as a certain Philistine's and tradesman's philosophy would have us believe, but the rashest, most labile and intelligent. The selective principle of evolution is, not the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the unfittest.

To avoid misconceptions, however, it must be pointed out that, in the very nature of things, not every inferior organism is a carrier of evolution. Many of these suffer from a "genuine" inferiority, being purely and simply incapable of living. Others may have the possibility of a higher organization within them, but are the martyrs of evolution, the vanguard over whose bodies the main body advances. Abnormal irritability may just as well lead to atrophy as to hypertrophy. Therefore not every inferior organism is a higher form of life, but every higher form of life is inferior.

Genius is never healthy

But our system has a still wider range. We have not yet considered one very important result of inferiority: the phenomenon of *compensation*. In introducing this auxiliary conception we arrive at a kind of physiology of genius. Genius is as good a name as any for the particular race of men who differ from the rest of their species in being creative, and in opposing to the *rumour* on which the masses live, a *fact:* the fact, that is, of their own ego, which is a forcing-bed, a seething focus of life, a powerful reality. As this type of human being will engage our attention a good deal in this book, this is an appropriate place for certain observations on it.

Although two generations have passed away since the appearance of Lombroso's *Genio e Follia,* the sensation that it made is still remembered. It sets out to prove, by the aid of a number of what may be called special portraits, that a deep affinity exists between the constitution of the genius and that of the lunatic. The merest glance at any branch of history, indeed, will bring any number of sick men of genius into our mind. Tasso and Poe, Lenau and Hölderlin, Nietzsche and Maupassant, Hugo Wolf and Van Gogh, lost their reason; Cæsar and Napoleon, Paul and Mohammed, were epileptics, and probably Alexander the Great and his father Philip also (for epilepsy seems to have been the " disease of the Temenidæ " which was hereditary in this family) ; Rousseau and Schopenhauer, Strindberg and Altenburg, suffered from persecution-mania. Even in the most unexpected instances some sign of degeneration will emerge on closer scrutiny. Take Bismarck for example: popularly supposed to be the very model of a burly bone-healthy junker, with immense reserves of strength and intellectual powers of resistance; but actually a great neurasthenic, whose life was a series of crises, who was prone to fall into paroxysms of weeping, and in whom psychical variations manifested themselves as *migraine,* facial neuralgia, and severe headaches. The anatomist Hansemann, who examined the brains of Helmholtz, Mommsen, Menzel, Bunsen, and other distinguished artists and scientists, points out the disproportionate frequency of hydrocephalus (in a mild degree) in people of outstanding intellectual ability. He suggests as an explanation that " this minor form of hydrocephalus in an inherited and specially powerful brain organization sets up a slight condition of irritability and thereby stimulates the numerous available paths of association to special activity." So genius has " water on the brain "! Certainly it seems safe to say that there has hardly been an important man who has not shown some symptom of mental disease. There is not a single writer of the front rank who does not display what the psychiatrists call iterative phenomena, signs, that is, of *dementia præcox,* the accumulation and repetition of certain pet phrases. In this connexion we may recall Plato, Luther, Nietzsche, and Carlyle. At bottom, the very essence of genius consists in this. Talent is many-sided, mobile, accommodating, and very variable; genius is mostly of a rigid and monumental one-sidedness. Rubens always painted the same rosy, fat, full-bosomed, broad-hipped female type; Schopenhauer left twelve volumes of collected works in which he unceasingly reiterates four to six basic ideas in the manner of a strict and rather pedantic schoolmaster. Dostoievski's characters all talk very much alike. But it is this very onesidedness, or even, one might say, narrow-mindedness, which makes the genius non-recurring and inimitable.

All this, and more — for to it everyone can no doubt add his quota — forces us to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a healthy genius.

Genius is never sick

On the other hand, we have only to look at the concentrated brain-force, the ruthless logic, the organizing and seeing and elucidating power by which the man of genius masters the whole phenomenal world; the virtuoso's confidence with which he takes the measure of all things and gives them their due expression; the superior art and knowledge with which he controls and shapes his own existence; the luminous consistency and structural sense in the design and execution, the building-up and scaling-down of his work; and the patience and care, steadiness and serene circumspection with which he goes his way — to be forced to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a sick genius.

Now, Lombroso himself has laid stress on the fact that although genius and madness are very similar states of mind, these are by no means identical states; that in fact there is something which radically distinguishes them. But what? Here Adler again gives us a pointer by establishing the existence of a tendency in our organism to compensate the inferiority of one organ by abnormal development of another, to make good the under-functioning on the one side by over-functioning on the other. We know that the halves of the brain, those of the thyroid gland, the lungs, kidneys, ovaries, and testicles possess the faculty of intervening on each other's behalf. But it also very frequently happens that the central nervous system takes upon itself the main burden of such compensation by forming special nerve paths and association fibres. The originally inferior organ of sight, for instance, is compensated by a strengthened psychic vision. "Organic inferiority determines . . . the direction of the imaginings of desire and guides . . . the processes of compensation." But the neurotic is a particularly significant special case. "The consciousness of a weak point absorbs the nervous subject to such an extent that he frequently, though without noticing it, brings the protective superstructure into being by dint of straining all his powers. In the process his sensibility becomes sharpened, he learns to notice connexions which escape others, he takes exaggerated precautions, he sees all imaginable consequences ahead when beginning to do or to suffer anything, strains to hear and to see further, and becomes small-minded, insatiable, penurious." "As a rule he will be distinguished by his scrupulously well-regulated behaviour, by precision and pedantry . . . for he hopes thereby to avoid increasing life's complications."

Here again we are up against a great general principle of the universe, which is operative in the dropping of a stone or the polarity of an electric cell as well as in the highest moral phenomena. Nightingales and white-throats are glorious singers, but they go plainly dressed; peacocks and birds of paradise have a gorgeous dress, but ugly voices. Tropical climates produce rank luxuriance of vegetation, but have a slackening effect on the character; while brutality, barrenness, and hostility in nature steel our energy and sharpen our understanding. Enhanced supply of fluid to the organs of circulation produces enlargement of the heart; a high temperature causes an increase in evaporation of water; infection brings an increase in temperature and health-bringing fever. Saints purchase the highest degree of their sanctification by world-renunciation; the darlings of the gods are short-lived. Hamlet pays for his knowledge by a lack of power to act, Othello for his heroism by ignorance. Always and everywhere Nature strives to balance the scales, making good every favour with a defect — but also every drawback with an advantage.

The threefold division of mankind

If we apply all this to the problem of genius, we find that every inferiority of the nerve system leads to a superiority of the cerebral system; *though only on condition that the cerebral material is present in the required abundance.* Let us use the handy, if scientifically not quite correct, term "peripheral system" to denote everything which serves for the reception of irritants, and "central system" for all that concerns the handling, regulation, and organization of such irritants. We shall then arrive at the following threefold division of humanity. First come persons with an abnormally irritable peripheral system of high capacity, but an inadequate central system. These are productive, but incapable of living; as a class they include every description of person who suffers from any psychical inferiority, from the neurasthenic up to the grievous paranoiac. Secondly, there are persons with an adequate central system, but a peripheral system of low capacity.

These have vitality, but are not productive; they include the big battalions of the "normal" people: the peasant, the bourgeois, the honest craftsman, the capable official, and the plain scholar. Thirdly, we have the man of genius with an extremely irritable peripheral system and a proportionately hypertrophied central system; he is both vital and productive. Genius is, on this showing, nothing more than an organized neurosis, an intelligent form of madness. And thus we begin to understand why genius not only regularly displays pathological traits, but is notable for extraordinary brain power and particularly strong and delicate sense of moral values: for this surplus is *essential*. The same relations may even occasionally be noticed in highly gifted people such as the Hellenes: the Dionysiac was the peripheral system, the Apollinian the central system, of the collective genius, "Greek genius."

Production as a refuge

The necessity of the Apollinian component in all creative genius is now generally admitted; it is less easy to convince people that the Dionysiac is of equal importance. A genius is not only a latent lunatic, but also a latent criminal, who only avoids conflict with the law because his genius enables him to take refuge in production. "I have never heard of a crime that I should be incapable of committing," said Goethe. For of such is the poet made. A crime that he could not commit would lie outside his powers of description. But he does not need to commit any crime: he can construct it artificially. Hebbel was making a deeper self-revelation than he knew, perhaps, when he wrote: "By creating murderers Shakspere saved himself from the necessity of becoming one." Hebbel's dramas are full of bloodshed, and his diaries also show a surprising delight in murder stories of every description. Wherever he found one of these, he noted it down, studied it psychologically, and turned it about with an interest that was quite disproportionate to the actual case. It seems extremely probable too that Schiller was a really clever robber and Balzac an extortioner of the first water: only their literary talent was incomparably greater than their talent for robbery or extortion. All the creative artists — Dante and Michelangelo, Strindberg and Poe, Nietzsche and Dostoievski — what were they but cannibals rescued by art? Then, the "monsters" of world-history — Caligula and Tiberius, Danton and Robespierre, Cæsar Borgia and Torquemada — what were they but artists cast adrift in reality? And would Nero, the emperor with a great artist's ambition, have become a bloodhound if he had possessed the artist's formative power? *Qualis artifex pereo:* which one may perhaps be permitted to translate: " What an extraordinary kind of artist dies in me! "

The " irritable weakness " is essential not only to the artist, but to the religious genius. A Buddha, a Paul, a Francis, must be quite peculiarly susceptible to irritation if he is to absorb all the sorrow of others and give it forth again as his own, if he is to recognize his brothers in all creatures. The genius who devotes himself to research is in similar case. He has to have a pathological flair for certain forces scattered over the universe which no one else can share; otherwise he will discover nothing. The birth-periods of great religions always coincide with the ages of national psychoses — the Orphic era in Greece, the centuries of early Christianity — and the same applies to those ages in which a new world-picture matures. At these points it is a matter of *real* disease, for, as we have seen, the compensatory regulating system, the protective intellectual superstructure, usually makes its appearance at a later stage. And this brings us back to our starting-point.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIÆVAL SOUL

> *"When the world was still in darkness, the heavens were bright, and now that the world has become clear, the heavens are darkened."*
> *Johann Nestroy*

The "Romanticism" of the Middle Ages

In the middle of the fourteenth century the millennial reign of faith, to which we give the collective name of the Middle Ages, became quite suddenly the Past. Its most representative creations — Scholasticism, Gothic architecture, erotic — the things which formed its glory and its life-essence, became shrivelled, parched, and calcified. This *medium ævum,* which for long was only a historian's desperate expedient, a temporary bridge hastily knocked together to provide a passage from the old to the new age, has in fact a precision of contour which differentiates it sharply from the ages before and after it. The reason for this is to be found primarily in the fact that there was in it still an international culture, which in its essential features constituted a unity.

Though not perhaps the most important of these features, the Romanticism, as we like to call it, of the Middle Ages is the most striking and the one most familiar to our consciousness. The conditions of that age come to us with a strange luminosity. Life was evidently a thing of sharper contrasts, of high-lights and deep shadows, and of fresh and rich complementary colours, while our own existence has more perspective, more half-tones, broken lights, and fine nuances. The great difference between them and ourselves resides partly in the fact that men lived less conscious of themselves and less critical. We see the men of the Middle Ages as gloomy, narrow, and credulous, and so far as the last is concerned, truly there was nothing they did not believe. They believed in every vision, legend, rumour, or poem; in true and false; in wise things and crazy things, saints and witches, God and the Devil. But, what is more, they believed in *themselves.* They saw realities everywhere, even where there were none; everything was real. And everywhere they saw the supreme reality, God: everything was of God. And over everything they succeeded in drawing the magic veil of their own dreams and deliriums: everything was beautiful. Hence the splendid optimism which neutralized their disregard of this world, their poverty, and their narrowness. He who believes in things is always full of joy and confidence. The Middle Ages were not gloomy, they were bright. We are entirely helpless before a Milky Way that has been dissolved into atoms by rationalism, but we can do a very great deal with a chubby angel and a club-footed devil in whom we believe wholeheartedly. In short, the life of those times had, as compared with our own, much more the character of a painting, a puppet-show, a fairy-tale, a mystery play — the character, in fact, of our childhood's life even now. It was, therefore, more sensible and impressive, more exciting and interesting, and, in a sense, more real.

Life as adventure

There were outer factors, too, which added to the picturesqueness of existence. First, the age lacked almost everything that the subsequent development of technology has done to ease and speed up existence. But every technical discovery is a piece of rationalized life; the exploitation of steam in our peaceful, and the use of gunpowder in our warlike, undertakings, have brought with them an impersonal element of order, uniformity, and mechanization which was lacking to that earlier age. For mediæval man war was still a picturesque form of activity, capable of firing his imagination. If he did not go to war, he was bound to spend his life more or less in idleness: the active idleness of innumerable knights, beggars, and travelling players, or the scholarly idleness of the clergy — and in these, too, there was something poetic. Further, nature was by no means so much in subjection to man, so domesticated, as today: she was still genuine nature — the "Wild West," glorious and terrible, an exquisite and a fearful mystery. There were no books. Everything depended on the spoken traditions. This alone must have fostered a free and imaginative tradition, even if the people had not believed and over-believed in the word as they did. (Even in our own enlightened days of universal compulsory schooling, unprejudiced research, and scientific outlook on the world, we shall not find two persons to give identical reports of even the simplest daily event witnessed by them both.) In other domains, too, there was this absence of certainty. The modern conception of security was alien to the Middle Ages in every department of life. Every journey was as important an undertaking as, say, a serious medical operation today. Every step was leaguered with dangers, and might lead into an ambush: life was one great adventure.

Psychosis of puberty

We might, indeed, call the Middle Ages the age of puberty for mid-European humanity, the thousand-year psychosis of adolescence in the form of a disguised sexuality, disguised as gynophobia in monastic orders, as lyricism in the *Minnesänger* cult, as algolagnia in Flagellantism, as hysteria in witchcraft, as swashbuckling in the Crusades. Now, the decisive character in the age of puberty is precisely that it turns almost everyone into a poet. And this poetic point of view is distinguished from the scientific and the practical by the fact that it views the world of natural phenomena symbolically. This enviable attitude was precisely that of the mediæval soul, which saw a symbol in everything: in great things as in small, in thought and deed, in love and hatred, eating and drinking, giving birth and dying. Into every utensil that he created, every house that he built, every ditty that he sang, every ceremony that he practised, mediæval man was able to put that deep symbolism which brings bliss because it is a spell both to bind and to loose. That is why he so universally and so easily absorbed the doctrines of Catholicism, which is nothing but a sense-appreciable system of purifying and elevating symbols of earthly things.

The sainted dog

It is typical of adolescence, again, that the spiritual palette of mediæval man showed no transitional shades. The harshest colours lay side by side: the purplish red of anger, the gleaming white of love, and the sombre black of despair. Traits of the utmost delicacy and gentleness are flanked by deeds of unreflecting brutality, which would necessarily arouse our loathing did we not set them down as ebullitions of childish impulsiveness. Even the outward behaviour of these people was in many respects akin to that of children. Outbursts of tenderness were almost queerly frequent, embraces and kisses were exchanged on every conceivable pretext and often without any pretext. Tears flowed easily and abundantly. Gestures in general played a far greater part than nowadays in the economy of expression — they still, in fact, held the primacy, and underlying every gesture was a deep symbolism that was felt far more strongly and deeply than symbolisms are by the men of later times. But side by side with this men had the honesty and forthrightness of children. They still stood in an elementary relation to nature, to field and forest, wind and cloud. And there is something strangely affecting, too, in their passionate love of animals, their wise, merry brothers, whom everywhere they honour — in sculpture and ornament, in satire and legend, at home and at court — who appear to them as like in kind to themselves, whom they regard even as full juridical persons liable to be brought up as witnesses and, for that matter, as criminals. One of the most charming stories handed down to us from the Middle Ages is that of a dog which gave its life for its master's child and was worshipped as martyr and saint by the people. In the presence of a world like this we have the sensation we so often experience in our dealings with children, the feeling that they know something which we do not know or no longer know, some magic secret or divine marvel wherein perhaps may lie the key to our whole existence.

No relation to money

Another infantile trait is the vague attitude of mediæval man to money. Sombart expresses this very wisely and kindly in saying that men stand in much the same spiritual relation to economic activities as the child to his lessons. The meaning of this is twofold: that work is purely a matter of ambition, and that it is only performed when it is absolutely imperative. The mediæval craftsman put good work and solidity above everything and had no conception of trashy goods or mass production. He stood behind his work in person and staked his honour on it like an artist. But he could afford to be much lazier as well as more conscientious than a present-day workman, and that for several reasons. In the first place, broadly speaking, needs were fewer; in the second, they were much more easily satisfied, even in a non-working existence, — which was not impossible, since almsgiving was much more widespread than now — and in the third, there would have been little point in exceeding the normal income, as the individual's standard of living was fairly well fixed, and such straining of incomes as is seen today in every small provincial town did not occur. To every class was allotted, so to say, its due measure of comfort and enjoyment, and to change one's class was practically impossible in mediæval society, where the various degrees of social condition were regarded, much as were the different genera of the animal world, as divinely ordered realities. Mediæval economy arose out of an agrarian society which rested on an almost communistic basis; but even in its later developments the equalitarian tendency appeared in the organizations which it evolved (the craftsmen's and merchants' guilds), or, if not equalization, at least an assimilation of its members: who earned in order to live, and did not live in order to earn. It has to be remembered also that throughout the Middle Ages, in which the Gospel was still taken seriously, there was always a more or less intense feeling that Mammon was a creature of the Devil — the taking of interest on money, for instance, always roused religious misgivings. And, finally, this young world was permeated with the wholesome sentiment that work was not a blessing, but a burden and a curse. Only think what a difference it must make to the whole fabric of feeling in a culture when money is not the supreme and universal divinity that commands the unprotesting sacrifices and directs the destinies of all!

Universalia sunt realia

But, granted that these people were children, they were nevertheless clever, gifted, mature children. The theory that they lived and worked in dull subjection will not bear examination, at least so far as the high Middle Ages was concerned. Men were clear thinkers then, bright minds, master-artists in logic, virtuosi in the poetic presentation of concepts, architects endowed equally richly with powers of construction and of calculation; and they were possessed, in all the manifestations of their life, by an instinct for style which has never since been equalled. Equally indefensible is the theory that mankind in the Middle Ages consisted of nothing but types. Neither in the State and the Church nor in art and science was there any lack of sharply outlined, uninterchangeable personalities. The confessions of an Augustine or an Abélard reveal an almost uncanny capacity for introspection and self-analysis, such as is unimaginable without the premiss of a highly developed and nuanced individuality. The portrait-statues show strikingly individual figures and at the same time demonstrate the sculptors' talent in seizing that non-recurrent individuality. As early as the tenth century Hroswitha, the nun, had developed the drama, that most individual of the arts, in almost all its branches

— history, prose, *comédie larmoyante,* and erotic tragedy — to a high stage of perfection, creating characters of such delicacy and transparency as positively to remind one of Maeterlinck. Indeed, the whole presumption of a "typical" man of the Middle Ages may possibly be the outcome of the fact that it was an eminently philosophic age.

This requires a little explanation. The central idea of the Middle Ages, its hovering invisible motto, as it were, ran as follows: "*universalia sunt realia* (It is only ideas that are real)." The great controversy on "universals" which ranged through practically the whole of the Middle Ages is never concerned with actual principles, but with their formulation. Of the three schools which succeeded each other, extreme Realism maintained: *Universalia sunt ante rem;* that is, ideas come before concrete things, both as to rank and as being the causes. Moderate Realism argued: *Universalia sunt in re;* that is, ideas are inherent in things as their true substance. And Nominalism posited the principle: *Universalia sunt post rem;* that is, that universals are abstracted from things as pure concepts of the reason. This last principle, in actual fact, involved the dissolution of Realism, but, as we shall see, its beginning falls outside the real Middle Ages.

Let us now consider what it must have meant to one's general world-picture when everything took off from the assumption that universals and conceptions, ideas, classes, were the genuine actuality — it is the assumption which, as we know, the greatest of Classical philosophers made the kernel of his system. But Plato only taught this theory, the Middle Ages lived it. Mediæval humanity forms a "*universal*" *people* in which climatic, national, local differences counted but as very secondary features. This people stands under the nominal dominion of a *universal king,* a Cæsar, who indeed usually exercised no more than a theoretical rulership, but never gave up his claims; and under the actual dominion of a *universal church* — or, rather, two churches, both of which claim to be universal: styling themselves one the universal, the Catholic, and the other the only true, the Orthodox. Further, as we have seen already, this universal people has a *universal economy* which seeks to equalize as far as possible the mode of life, the standard of wages, the production and consumption of the individual. It has a *universal style:* the Gothic, which inspires and controls every work of art, from the platter to the cathedral, from the door-nail to the royal palace. It has a *universal code:* the etiquette of chivalry, with rules of behaviour, modes of greeting, and social ideals which are recognized wherever Western man sets his foot. It has a *universal science:* theology, which is the summit, the meaning, and the guide-line of all thought. It has a *universal ethic:* the evangelical; a *universal law:* the Roman; and a *universal language:* the Latin. In sculpture it favours the ornamental; that is, the conceptual; in architecture, the abstract, the constructive. In general its reaction is anti-naturalistic; but that is not to be attributed to any want of technical ability — the portrait-statues sufficiently prove that. Naturalism, however, is the mark, never of an artistic climax, but either of a crude beginning or of a deliberate programmatic return to earlier stages. Even nature, for these mediævals, was an abstraction, a vague and almost unactual idea, with practically only a negative existence as foil to the realm of the spirit and of Grace.

The world-cathedral

Thus was the mediæval world built up, on a finely graded series of believed abstractions and lived ideas, rising in pure, clean lines like a cathedral or one of the elaborate "*Summæ*" of the Schoolmen, with on the one hand the secular side, with its peasants and citizens, knights and vassals, counts and dukes, kings and emperors, and on the other the spiritual side, with its broad foundation of believers and its ascending scale of priests, abbots, bishops, popes, councils, leading finally to a ladder of angels, of whom the uppermost sit at the feet of God — a nobly imagined and well-ordered hierarchy of universals. Such a humanity could indeed take as its motto — and that in full philosophic consciousness of its import and not as a mere conceit of dialectical cleverness — the proposition "*Universalia sunt realia.*"

The physics of Belief

The reign of this principle, so alien to ordinary actuality, was prolonged, and indeed was made possible at all, by the mediæval view of the world as a fact of belief and not as a scientific phenomenon. The spiritual guiding line remained essentially that of Anselm and of Augustine before him: *neque enim quæro intelligere, ut credam, sed credo, ut intelligam* (I do not seek to know in order to believe, but I believe in order to know) — "for human wisdom will break itself on the rock of faith ere it breaks that rock." The people of that day were free from the modern superstition that it is the exclusive aim of human thought and research to explore and control as exhaustively as possible the world of experience. What did they seek to know? Two things, *Deum et animam.* "*Deum et animam,*" says Augustine with quite unmistakable decision, "*scire cupio. Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino.*" Physics is for him first and foremost that which teaches God; whatever else it may teach is immaterial, since it contributes nothing to salvation. And three-quarters of a millennium after, at the peak of the Middle Ages, Hugh de St. Victor makes the statement that knowledge is only valuable in so far as it serves edification, that knowledge for knowledge' sake is pagan. Richard de St. Victor adds that reason is not the right instrument for ascertaining the truth. This can surprise us only if we fail to remember that precisely the highest truths of Christianity are above reason, but not on that account contrary to reason. Thomas Aquinas, the classical philosopher of Catholicism, made this perfectly clear, and already in Tertullian, on the very threshold of Church history, we find the famous sentences: "*Crucifixus est Dei Filius; non pudet, quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est Dei Filius; prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit; certum est, quia impossibile est* (The Son of God was crucified; that is not shameful, because it is shameful. And the Son of God died; that is credible, because it is absurd. And he rose from the dead; that is quite certain, because it is impossible)." We may, if we wish, see a childish trait again here, for in fact children do see the most discrepant things as the most credible; the most impossible as the most certain. They put much more faith in a fairy-tale than in a sober narrative and regard all phenomena which break away from the course of natural causality as not only higher, but more real. And mediæval man's physics was precisely of that order. To him it was the miracle that was reality, while the world of natural phenomena was but the pale reflection and insubstantial shadow of a higher, clearer, truer world of thought. In short, he led a magical existence. And again we have to ask ourselves whether in this matter he was not led by a deeper, if more obscure, knowledge, whether he did not come nearer to the root of the mystery than we?

Such delicate and hazardous speculations as phenomenalism, scepticism, agnosticism, were anything but unknown in the Middle Ages. In Augustine's self-communings we find such passages as these: "*Tu, qui vis te nosse, scis esse te? Scio. Unde scis? Nescio. Simplicem te sentis an multiplicem? Nescio. Moveri te scis? Nescio. Cogitare te scis? Scio*" — exactly and unequivocally the same deduction as that with which Descartes opened a new era of human thought: "*Cogito ergo sum.*" That bodies exist, we read in the *Confessions,* is known only by faith; but this faith is essential for practice. In just this manner did Berkeley found his idealistic dogmatism at the beginning of the eighteenth century. But we need faith also, says Augustine, for knowing the wills of other men — here is a proposition that has the very ring of Schopenhauer. Even if there be no evil, he says elsewhere, there is undeniably the fear of evil — there is psychology of the most modern order. But the great difference between such speculations and the researches of the newer philosophy lies in this, that they rest, without exception, firmly and immovably on faith and that they proceed from faith, whereas the epistemology of modern times finds at best only a final outlet in faith. One may well doubt if anyone soever in the Middle Ages impugned the elementary conception of the Creation as a single great act of saving, and the world as a phenomenon of belief. They had, in fact, a complete comprehension of the doctrine of Jesus, with its kernel in the solemn and unambiguous exhortation to believe; not to doubt that this world exists and is a work of God, that all things exist, even the meanest and lowest — poor and simple, children, sinners, lilies, and sparrows — if we only believe in them, or, which is the same thing, love them.

Everything is

The picture that the Middle Ages offer us, then, is full of contradictions. Seen in one aspect, it has a look of blessed repose, of a majestic noonday stillness which illumines and protectingly embraces all living things; in another aspect we have the spectacle of a splendid discontent, of deep internal rendings and stirrings. No doubt everything lived and moved in God and felt itself enveloped in God; but how to satisfy Him? That was the dread question which trembled everywhere under the serene and peaceful surface of existence. The mediæval soul lies before us, therefore, as a clear, silvery pool, but at the bottom there is agitation: a perpetual

The scene changes

seeking without finding; a brewing, a bubbling, a reaching and fumbling. Spires rear themselves to heaven, asymptotes in stone, striving to lose themselves in the blue depths of the firmament, insatiable in the erotic yearning that was their most fundamental and original discovery or invention, the love that so hypostasizes its object that this becomes unattainable and is reduced to a symbol of infinite longing. And above it all rises the figure of Christ, the incomparable and yet the exemplar whom man has solemnly been bound, by baptism, to copy in his life.

By the middle of the fourteenth century there appears on the stage an entirely different kind of humanity, or, rather, one which contains the germ of another kind. There is still seeking, but also finding; still agitation, but no longer only in the depths. A tragic culture is making way for a bourgeois culture, a chaotic for an organic, finally even for a mechanical one. The world is thenceforward no God-inspired mystery, but a man-made rationality.

CHAPTER III

THE INCUBATION PERIOD

> *"Go your imperceptible ways, everlasting Providence, only do not let me despair of you through this imperceptibility. Do not let me despair of you even though your steps should seem to me to lead backward! It is not true that the straight line is always the shortest."*
>
> *Lessing*

The discovery of the Plague

To apply the name "incubation period" to the development phase in which the man of the modern age was being prepared, rather suggests that the new thing that was being brought into the world was a poison. And so it was, as we shall see. Yet it was only a partial poison, for on this globe of ours beneficial and pernicious influences operate in an intermixture; and, moreover, as we have tried to show in our first chapter, poison is often the form behind which the renewing, enriching, and perfecting process of organic being chooses to hide. If, by introducing elements which appear to be hostile, harmful, and essentially alien, we are able to produce double flowers in plants and new heads in animals, why should not the same treatment have similar results in whole eras, giving us new heads and more assertive, fuller, and richer forms of life? Be that as it may, we do not, for the present, intend to imply by the label "incubation period" any judgment of values, negative or positive. It simply denotes that century and a half in which the New grew and matured in humanity's womb until such time as its strength and stature fitted it to face the light.

As I said, the hour in which the new age was born is marked by a heavy sickness of European humanity — the Black Death. It is not, however, suggested that the Black Death brought about the new age. On the contrary, the new age — modernity — came first and it was through it that the Plague happened. Says Troels-Lund, in his very suggestive book *Gesundheit und Krankheit in* *der Anschauung alter Zeiten:* " It is not improbable that illnesses have a history of their own; so that each age has its particular illnesses, which had not occurred just so before and will never occur just so again." The only explanation for this, obviously, must be that every age *makes* its own illnesses, which are just as much a part of its physiognomy as everything else that it produces, just as much its specific creations as its art, its strategy, its religion, its physics, its economy, its erotic, and all its other manifestations. They are, so to say, its inventions and discoveries in the pathological domain. It is the spirit which builds itself a body: always the spirit is the prime mover, both in the individual and in the mass. If we are prepared to stand by this comparison — admittedly a lame one in more than one respect — with the individual, we shall have to say: the Black Death is no more the cause of modernity than pregnancy is the cause of a new organism; for in the one case as in the other the true cause lies in the entry of a new life-germ into the mother-body, and the result and expression of this fact constitutes pregnancy. The " new spirit " generated a sort of development-sickness in European humanity, a general psychosis; and one — the most prominent — of the forms of this sickness was the Black Death. But whence this new spirit came and why it arose just then and there, no one knows. The *Weltgeist* will not disclose that secret.

Neither has any one unravelled the immediate circumstances under which the Plague, known generally as the Black Death or the Great Death, suddenly gripped Europe. Some maintain that it slipped in in the train of the Crusades, but if so, it is strange that it should never have been even approximately so terrible among the Arabs as it was with us. Others have put its place of origin as far away as China. Contemporary opinion laid the responsibility on the constellations, the prevailing wickedness, the unchastity of the priests, and the Jews. There it was, anyhow — and suddenly, first in Italy, then slinking over the whole Continent. Part of its uncanniness lay precisely in this slow and steady progress from house to house and from land to land, which was so unlike the raging of most other epidemics. It took possession of Germany, France, England, Spain, and finally the northerly countries right up to Iceland. What made it still more horrible was its incalculable behaviour. At times it spared whole stretches of country, as, for instance, eastern Franconia, and skipped individual houses; or it would disappear all of a sudden and reappear after years. Right into the middle of the fifteenth century we read in the chronicles: "Plague in Bohemia," "The Great Death on the Rhine," "Plague in Prussia," "Death in the country," "Year of general death," "Ten thousand die in Nuremberg," "Plague throughout Germany, strong men die, few women, more rarely children," "Great pestilence in the coast towns." It appears to have been a form of bubonic plague, manifesting itself in swelling of the lymphatic glands (the so-called plague-boils), violent headache, great weakness, and apathy, though also in some cases delirium. According to contemporary reports, death occurred on the first or second, or at latest the seventh, day. The mortality was terrific everywhere. While it was at its height, we hear of sixty deaths daily in Berne, a hundred in Cologne and in Mainz, a total of thirteen thousand at Elbing. Two-thirds of the students at Oxford died, and three-fifths of the Yorkshire clergy. When the Minorites counted their dead at the end of two years of plague, these amounted to over a hundred and twenty thousand. Europe's total losses, according to recent calculation, amounted to twenty millions. The men of the day found it easier to count the survivors than those who had perished.

The parallel epidemic

With the Plague came another movement. The Flagellant monks, in exaltation, went about in great swarms from place to place, waving flags and singing mournful songs, dressed in black cloaks and repulsive caps, with a gleaming red cross before them. Their appearance in a town was the signal for all bells to ring, and all the people flocked to church. The Flagellants then flung themselves down, scourging, singing, and praying for hours together, reading out letters that were said to have fallen from heaven, which condemned the sinful ways of laity and clergy and exhorted them to repent. Their doctrine, if such it can be called, was undoubtedly heretical. They taught that flagellation was the true communion, in that their own blood became mingled with the Saviour's. Priests were unworthy and superfluous, and their presence was not tolerated at their devotional exercises. The effect on a terrified humanity that felt the Church and the world to be falling about its ears was immense. Gradually, however, the ranks of the Flagellants came to be reinforced by various unclean elements, such as adventurers, social outcasts, beggars, Manichees, and perverts. What unspeakable emotions, compounded of hope and fear, disgust and awe, must have seized the people at the advance of one of these ghastly processions of fanatics, lunatics, and criminals, whose coming was heralded from afar by their ghastly and monotonous chanting: "Lift ye up your hands and pray, God may turn this pest away. Lift ye up your arms, implore Him to veil His face no more! Jesus, through Thy name of Three, From our sins oh set us free! Let us by Thy blood so red From the Death be rescued!"

These Flagellant bands were not, however, simply a phenomenon arising out of the Plague, a mere attempt at a sort of religious therapy. It is highly probable that what they represent is a parallel epidemic or further symptom of the general psychosis, the Plague being only an external point on which it seized. In support of this theory we have the fact that widespread mental disorders made their appearance at that time quite independently of the Plague. A whole year before, men and women were to be seen dancing hand in hand in circles by the hour, working themselves up to a pitch at which they foamed at the mouth and sank down half fainting. During the dance they had epileptic fits and visions. It was the now familiar St. Vitus's dance, which quickly spread to wider circles, taking on more and more of a sexual character as it developed and finally becoming a sort of fashion, so that vagabonds could make a living by imitating the symptoms. In the same order of phenomena was the extraordinary Crusade of the Children of Schwäbisch-Hall in Germany, when as the result of a religious hypnosis a band of children set out to do homage to the archangel Michael at St. Michael's Mount in Normandy. The fixation of this idea was so strong that those among them who were forcibly kept back became seriously ill and in some cases died.

The well-poisoners

The contemporary persecutions of the Jews also had a pathological and epidemic character, though it cannot be said that this was a phenomenon which might not have taken place at any other time. The rumour, which sprang up suddenly in southern France, that the Jews had poisoned the wells, spread faster than the plague into the adjoining countries. It led to a horrible slaughter of the Jews, in which the Flagellants formed the shock-troops and the

Jews displayed that blind heroism which appears throughout their whole history from the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Titus down to the Russian *pogroms*. Mothers who saw their husbands burnt at the stake flung themselves with their children into the flames. At Esslingen the whole Jewish community assembled in the synagogue and deliberately set fire to it. At Constance a Jew, who had been baptized to escape death by burning, was afterwards seized with remorse and burnt himself and his whole family in his own house. The Jewish persecutions were primarily religious in character, but there were, no doubt, social causes as well. The attitude of the world towards the Jewish question in those days was ambiguous. Both the spiritual and the temporal powers tolerated the Jews, and indeed extended to them a certain amount of protection. In fact, they could not readily do without them, not only because of their special talent for economic affairs (which, be it noted, was a far greater asset then than now), but because of their higher education. The courts appreciated them as transmitters of Arabian culture and, still more, as physicians. Above all, they were fruitful and tractable objects of taxation. Among the sources of income allotted to the various feudal lords as privileges the Jews always figure in the list side by side with the right of coining, toll money, salt-mines, and the like. But the people never forgot that it was the Jews who killed the Saviour, and when here and there a gentle-minded preacher tried to point out that it was not right to visit the guilt of this upon the rest of the race for ever, it was easy to reply with the further argument that the Jews still continued to deny the Gospel and even fought it by secret means. That the smallest, weakest, and most scattered of all the civilized nations of the West should be the only one to hold obstinately aloof from the light of Christianity was a fact — a stupendous fact — which, psychoanalytically, the people of that time could not get over. Matters were made worse by the really hard oppression practised by Jewish extortioners. The Jews were the only people whose religion permitted the taking of interest, and in their eyes it might appear even meritorious to inflict the utmost damages on the unbelieving "*Goy*." In addition, all other callings were closed to them, for naturally none but Christians were admitted to the guilds. Thus it came about that not a few of these persecutors were less concerned with burning Jews than with burning bonds.

"Their possessions," says a contemporary chronicler, "were the poison which killed them."

Cosmic disturbance

Not only humanity, but heaven and earth, too, were convulsed in those days. Ominous comets appeared. In England storms raged with a fury unknown before or since. Gigantic swarms of locusts descended on the fields. Earthquakes ravaged the country — Villach was destroyed along with thirty villages around it. The earth seemed to become barren, and blight and drought caused the crops to fail everywhere. These phenomena may not be just dismissed as "accidental freaks of nature" nor yet as "superstitious popular imaginings." If it be true that at that time humanity was shaken by a great jerk, a mysterious upheaval, a profound shudder of conception, then the earth must have had some similar experience; and not the earth only, but the neighbouring planets, nay, the whole solar system. The signs and wonders witnessed by that "limited and credulous" age were real signs, distinct manifestations of a wondrous concatenation of cosmic happening.

World-downfall

Man, at any rate, distraught by so many calamities and contradictions in his present and future, rushed about in terror, straining his eyes for something firm. Serious people took refuge entirely in their God or their Church, fasting, praying, and doing penance. The frivolous flung themselves into a life of unrestrained worldliness, opening all the valves to vice and greed and making of life the fattest hangman's breakfast possible. Many thought the Day of Judgment was at hand. And in all this — in the pessimistic and ascetic currents as in the unwholesome, bloated merrymaking, which was merely a sort of consumptive's sensuality or "tomorrow we die" recklessness — there was a general feeling of the world's end which, expressed or unexpressed, conscious or unconscious, permeated and dominated the whole era. And men's instinct was perfectly right; the world did really come to an end. The world that had been, that strange world of the Middle Ages, so limited and so luminous, pure and depraved, soaring and fettered, foundered in misery and thunder into the depths of time and eternity, never to return.

Dethronement of Universals

The fundamental principle on which the mediæval world-outlook rested was: the realities are the universals. What is real is, not the individual, but the estate to which he belongs. Not the particular priest was real, but the Catholic Church, whose gifts of grace he distributed; even if he were a rake, a liar, or a debauchee, the sacredness of his office was not affected thereby, since he had no reality. Not the knight who tilted in the tournament, wooed his lady with song, or fought in the Holy Land was real, but the great ideal of the knightly order which embraced and exalted him. Not the artist who made poems in stone and glass was real, but the lofty cathedral which he, a nameless one of many, created. Not even the thoughts which the human mind evolves in solitary wrestling were real, but only the everlasting truths of the faith, and the business of that mind was simply to arrange, justify, and expound.

At the end of the Middle Ages all these conceptions began to waver and become fluid, and finally they turned into their exact opposites. The great John Duns (surnamed Scotus on account of his origin and *doctor subtilis* on account of his powers of hair-splitting), the head of the Scotists, who died at the age of thirty-four in 1308, was still a moderate Realist. He held that all science must break down if universals, which were the aim and end of all scientific knowing, consisted of mere concepts of the reason. He explained, however, that Reality was in the relation of indifference to the general and the particular alike and could, therefore, incorporate both; and elsewhere he went so far as to admit that individuality was not a defective but a more complete reality, in fact the *ultima realitas*. The Franciscan Pierre Aureol, who wrote somewhat later and has remained obscure, was clearly a conceptualist; he declared universals to be mere conceptions (*conceptus*), abstracted from individual things and having no existence in nature; the only part of Socrates that was real being the *Socratitas*, not the *humanitas*. But the real founder of Nominalism and the most famous of Duns Scotus's pupils, William of Occam (the *doctor singularis, venerabilis inceptor,* and *doctor invincibilis*), who died in the year of the Black Death, went much further. He too began by arguing that the universal was a mere *conceptus mentis, significans univoce plura singularia,* and that it did not exist in things, but only in the reasoning mind; and that it did not follow, merely because we know by the aid of universal concepts, that the universal possesses reality. From this he then proceeded to a complete phenomenalism. Duns Scotus had still seen in concepts actual copies of things, but with Occam they became merely signs (*signa*) which were called forth in us by means of things, put by us in relation to things, and not necessarily even resembling those things, any more than smoke as a sign of fire resembles fire in any way, or sighs as a sign of pain resemble pain in any way. In the further course of his deductions Occam arrived at a peculiar type of indeterminism. God, he argued, is bound by no laws. Nothing happens of necessity, for otherwise the facts of chance and of evil in the world would be inexplicable. God was not obliged to create this particular world; He might have created a perfectly different one — or none at all. There are, therefore, no universally valid ethical forms: God might just as easily have declared unkind and selfish deeds to be meritorious. The Decalogue was not an absolute code of morals, it had only a qualified validity. It forbade murder, theft, and polygamy; but Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son, the Israelites carried off the golden vessels of the Egyptians, and the patriarchs allowed themselves a number of wives — and God approved. These arguments, originating in part from Occam and in part from Duns Scotus, could have but one meaning — that God is beyond good and evil. But the crown of Occamist philosophy is its profession of irrationalism and agnosticism. All knowing that goes beyond the immediate experience of the moment is a matter of faith. God is unknowable, His existence does not follow as a consequence of the conception of Him. The existence of a first cause cannot be proved, there might have been an infinite series of causes. Several worlds with different creators are conceivable; the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the soul's immortality can never form the subject of logical demonstration.

Christ in the donkey

It would be a serious mistake, however, to conclude from the foregoing that Occam was a free-thinker, a sort of forerunner of Voltaire or Nietzsche. He was undoubtedly an energetic supporter of the Modernists of that day, who fought against the exclusive power of the Pope and for the independence of emperor and bishops, but at the same time he was strictly orthodox. His sceptical-critical subtleties were simply the powerful expressions of his religiousness. The thought of the unlimited divine despotism was soothing rather than irritating to him. His submissiveness would not be satisfied if he imagined any limitations, even those of causality and moral, to God's omnipotence, and by emphasizing the impossibility of proving the Christian mysteries he put them out of reach of attack and doubt once and for all. Faith became a virtue only when the incomprehensibility, and, indeed, the senselessness, of ecclesiastical doctrine had been realized. It was through him that the principle "*Credo quia absurdum*" was endowed with the strength and spirituality to make its last and finest rally. He laid the emphasis entirely on the "*Credo*": it was just the fact that faith and knowledge were two separate things which made the preservation of faith possible. But how if, one fine day, it occurred to someone to lay the emphasis on "*absurdum*" and so arrive at the conclusion that this fact of faith and knowledge being two different things annihilates faith and saves knowledge? — A shallow notion, but an extremely dangerous one. To Occam this possibility of shifting the accent does not seem to have occurred. Instead, with tireless energy he dragged up all possible absurdities so that he might combine them with faith. One of his propositions, which strikes us as a fearful blasphemy, though it gave not the smallest offence at the time, was: If God had pleased, He might just as well have embodied Himself in a donkey as in a man.

This instance — one of many — shows clearly how with Occam the principle of absurdity overshot itself, rebounded, and finally turned against itself, and how entirely opposed it was to the naïvely credulous faith in miracles of the Middle Ages. Quite without Occam's knowledge or intention it changes the punctuation, so to say, and reappears all at once with the opposite sign. The principle, under Occam's excessive forcing, is strained to breaking. So sharp a point as he put on to it was bound to break. But there was nothing unconscious or unintended about his Nominalism. The work of five hundred years of Scholasticism issued in one sentence that killed it: Universals were not real; they were neither *ante rem* nor *in re*, but *post rem* and even *pro re*: mere representative signs and vague symbols of things, *vocalia, termini, flatus vocis,* nothing but artificial aids to easier comprehension and at bottom verbiage without content — *Universalia sunt nomina.*

The triumph of Nominalism is the most weighty fact in modern history — much more important than the Reformation, gunpowder, and printing. It turned the mediæval world-picture back to front and the existing system of the universe upside-down.

Everything else was merely the effect and consequence of this new aspect.

The two faces of Nominalism Nominalism has a double face, and the side which we see depends upon whether we place its centre of gravity on its negative or its positive result. In its negative aspect it denied the reality of universals, of collective concepts, and of superior ideas — all the great vital forces which formerly had dominated, filled, and sustained existence — and is, therefore, on that side identical with scepticism and nihilism. In its positive aspect it affirmed the reality of singulars, discrete concepts, momentary bodily sensations — all those forces of orientation which control the life of the senses and the practice of everyday actuality — and was identical with sensualism and materialism. We shall now examine more clearly the effect which these two new dominants exercised in the life of that time.

Twilight It was as if humanity had suddenly lost its static organ — a fundamental characteristic, this, of all periods of growth and transition. The old values count no longer, the new not yet. The feeling is that of a Northern night, when yesterday's light still floats dimly on the far horizon, and the dawn is but a pale glimmer. The soul was entirely in a twilight stage, wherein everything had its double meaning. The world's lineaments could no longer be interpreted. Or, to put it in another way, men were like a reader when evening sets in: it is too dark to read by the sun's light and too light to read by the lamp. And this parallel, as we shall see, takes on a very special secondary meaning when applied to the beginning of the new age, when men had lost the art of reading the book of the world in the natural light of God and were not yet able to do so by the artificial light of Reason which they themselves were about to kindle.

Folie circulaire The immediate result of this complete disorientation was profound *pessimism*. Because men were compelled to despair of the forces of the past, they had to despair of all other forces as well. Because the old securities had failed, it was felt that there were none at all. The second result was a certain intellectual *atomism*. The imaginative powers had no centre of gravitation, of crystallization, around which to order themselves in a system; they became centrifugal, they dissolved. And because of this lack of a commanding central idea, the will-power of humanity was without directives, a condition which may equally well find expression in *aboulia* as in *hyperboulia,* in obstructive as in discharging neuroses. Men fell alternately into extreme depression and lethargy, melancholia and inertia, or into the maniacal stages of a pathological restlessness, the disease described in psychiatry as *folie circulaire.* Lastly, it was inevitable that the lack of fixed points should also lead to *perversity* in every direction. In lines, colours, costume, manners, modes of thought, art forms, legal standards, men came to prefer the bizarre, affected, obscure, distorted, disharmonious, stinging, spicy, or abstruse. There was a logic of the absurd, a physics of the abnormal, an ethic of the immoral, and an æsthetic of the ugly. As in an earthquake, the standards and guide-lines of the entire normal practice of life — earthly, legal, and moral — collapsed.

Anarchy from above

Everything tottered. The two co-ordinates on which the whole of mediæval life was oriented — the Empire and the Papacy — began to lose their distinctness and became at times almost invisible. In the first half of the fourteenth century the Empire witnessed the strange farce of a common double-government by Louis of Bavaria and Frederick of Austria, and by the year 1410 there were three German kings, Sigismund, Wenzel, and Jost of Moravia. At almost the same time, in 1409, the world witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of three popes appearing simultaneously: one Roman, one French, and one chosen by the Council. For the people of those days this was very much as if they had suddenly had three Saviours sprung upon them, or as if every man had been told that he had three fathers. And as both emperors and popes denounced each other as being usurpers, godless fellows, and deceivers, it was easy to regard them as such, the whole lot of them, and, what was more, to see in their office no divine dispensation, not a God-appointed but a manœuvred dignity; not the summit of spiritual and temporal grandeur, but a lie-born fraud. As Nathan said: "Your three rings are none of them genuine. The real one must have been lost." The *possibility* that a real schism could occur at all was sufficient to make the Papacy-idea rootless and bloodless.

Loosening of the orders of society

Here, then, we have a case of dissolution first attacking the head, of anarchy at the summit of the social scale. But it did not take long to spread downwards into all the strata. A general stampede is the social hall-mark of the age. Vassals did military service only when they felt inclined or when there was the prospect of personal advantage. The much-praised fealty of the Middle Ages was transformed into a cool, business-like relationship, which was governed by opportunism rather than by piety. Vassals became detached from the glebe to which they had been so closely bound in their almost plantlike existence. In the towns the patriciate, ruling by reason of birth and tradition, secure in their position, had gradually become slack and corrupt, and, as they sank like dregs to the bottom, new forces, unhampered by prejudices or the past, rose upward from the depths. Presently it was the turn of the declassed and the disinherited, the toilers and the heavy-laden, who pushed up behind them with communistic programs of all sorts, which then still had a Christian colouring. Class-sacredness ceased to exist. Contemporary literature has given us a vivid picture of the poisonous mockery and measureless scorn that were the weapons of both sides in the war of the classes. Both in Shrovetide plays and in the last pale echoes of the knightly epic the peasant is jeered at as a coarse half-wit, a sort of village idiot; but the peasant had his revenge in his tales of Till Eulenspiegel, juicy vulgarities in which the boor shams stupidity only in order the better to shame and to kick the townsman. The demoralization of the nobility, again, was a permanent theme with writers of the period, and the immorality of the clergy was riddled with the devastating satire of *Reineke Fuchs*. But, for all the contempt and abuse showered upon the hated estates, no one was content to stay in his own class. The mediæval principle that a man's class was born with him like his skin had long ceased to have any meaning. It was the peasant's ambition to be a townsman in fine clothes, a townsman's to be a knight in armour; clod-hoppers challenged each other to absurd duels, craftsmen's guilds started feuds with one another, while the knight for his part cast envious eyes on the bourgeois and his comfortable existence. The fate of that folly which scorns its natural place and covets that of its neighbour is demonstrated with overpowering realism in *Meier Helmbrecht*, the story of a rich farmer's son who is set on becoming a knight at any cost and comes to a miserable end in consequence. This novel tells of something else, too; it shows that the sacred bond of the family no longer existed. Son and daughter speak of their parents in language which would be repellent even in our own day. And the process of emancipation and these loosenings and underminings nowhere worked themselves out in quiet and slow evolution. On the contrary, the age is one immense battlefield, full of unceasing strife, inward and outward, open and underground — struggle of councils against popes, of popes against emperors, of emperors against princes, of princes against patricians, of patricians against guilds, of guilds against priests, and of everyone against everyone else.

Sickening of the metaphysical organ

In the face of such a catastrophic collapse of all values, such a radical loosening of all bonds, only two attitudes were possible: the totally uncritical, that of blind prostration before destiny — in a word, *fatalism;* or the hypercritical, which denies every sort of necessity and may be called *subjectivism*. The Scotists adopted the first of these. Turning on the Thomists, who had maintained that everything reasonable was willed by God, they asserted that everything God willed was reasonable. It was wrong to say that God did a thing because it was good; the fact was that the thing was good because God did it. The most subjective point of view was that held by the "Free-minded Brethren," the "itinerant Beghards," undisciplined hordes who carried on their mission in the Rhine lands and elsewhere, living by begging or, rather, by extortion and robbery — which they justified on the ground that private possessions were sinful. They spread the doctrine by sermons and writings and also by discussions, in which they developed great shrewdness and readiness of repartee. Their verbal arrows made them famed and feared. Their main tenets were: There is no God above the world. Man is God. Since man is like God, there is no need for intermediaries. A good man's blood was as venerable as the blood of Christ. The moral was that which the Brethren and Sisters declared to be moral. Freedom knows no rule and, therefore, no sin. For the "mind," there are no such things as theft or fornication. The kingdom of God and true blessedness are on earth, and therein consists true religion. In short the Ego, purely self-regarding and unburdened with scruples of any kind, is the true Christ.

Both standpoints were nihilistic. Scotism laid such emphasis on the omnipotence and sole reality of God as to extinguish the individual; the intellectualist Beghard laid such emphasis on the omnipotence and sole reality of the individual as to extinguish God. At first glance it appears that Scotism was the acme of religiousness, but on closer consideration one realizes that it was based not on supreme confidence in *divine* reason, but on a profound despair of *human* reason. Thus in reality the one doctrine discloses the same exaltation of feeling and the same weakening of the metaphysical organ as the other. Extreme heat and extreme cold usually engender similar physiological results, and the theorems which proceed from these two polar world-outlooks are often similar, even to the point of becoming confused with one another. As we have seen in the case of Occam, many of the utterances of the dying Scholasticism are distinguishable from utter blasphemy only by their intention.

Practical nihilism

In the beginning of the fifteenth century we see the nihilism of the age becoming actual and practical in the Hussite movement, when for the first time the *idealistic urge to destroy* of Slavism appears on the scene of European history. Stung to superhuman efforts by the short-sighted, cruel, and treacherous policy of their opponents, the Czech armies performed feats which were the terror and the marvel of the age. They invented a wholly modern form of tactics which proved itself irresistible, and, fired by their threefold religious, national, and social enthusiasm, they overran everything that stood in their way. The wild Hussite torrent soon poured over its native boundaries and flooded half Germany, raging everywhere with a senseless vandalism which destroyed for the sake of destroying, without motive either of gain or of revenge. It was the blind, helpless hatred of Slavism for reality, the quality which alone explains why the Russians endured Tsarism for centuries and will possibly endure Soviet rule for centuries more.

The situation in which the soul found itself in those days is summed up in Petrarch's description of the conditions prevailing at the Papal court of Avignon: "Everything good has gone to pieces there: first liberty, then peace, joy, hope, faith, and love. Immense losses to the soul! But in the realm of avarice this is accounted no loss, as long as the revenues do not diminish. There the future life is counted as a fable. All that is said about hell, the resurrection of the body, the Day of Judgment, the Crucifixion — all, all are fables and mere idiocies. Truth is held to be madness there, abstinence absurd, shame shameful, sins of incontinence as proofs of broad-mindedness. The more stained a life is, the higher it is esteemed, and fame increases by crime."

Intensified economic life

But it is time now to fix our eyes on the positive features of the age also. These, as has been already indicated, expressed themselves in the direction of materialism. It was a time of extraordinary economic progress, both internal and external. Production was becoming rationalized and refined, and trading was increasing both in scope and in profitableness. The question now is this — was this increasingly vigorous, raging, and acquisitive materialism a result of the intensification of economic life or vice versa? The reader will by now be in no doubt that for us the only acceptable hypothesis is the second. First there came into being a definite and particular constitution of mind, a disposition, and out of this proceeded a definite phase of development of the economic setting. If a man focuses interest chiefly on the invisible inner-world of his intellect and natural feeling, or on the mysterious over-world of God and the beyond, he will produce strong and creative work in the fields of faith, thought, and art, but his economic existence will remain monotonous and primitive. If, on the other hand, he directs the full force of his attention more keenly on the tangible, visible, tastable world around him, it is perfectly inevitable that he should attain to a higher economic florescence, inventing new tools and new technical methods, discovering new sources of wealth, bringing new forms of comfort and enjoyment into existence, and making himself the master of matter.

In economic history we read a great deal about " contributory circumstances " and " favourable conditions." But the circumstances and conditions are always there, it is only that they are differently exploited in different ages. And even if they were not there, the economic will, if it were only sufficiently powerful, would conjure them up out of nothing and forcibly shape every condition into a " favourable " one and every circumstance into a " contributory " one.

As a result of the rapid decay of Byzantium, Levantine trade — the most important for Europe — had gradually left the old Danube route and taken to the sea. In the fourteenth century we find in Italy a series of truly royal town-republics, at the head of which stood Venice with her unlimited sway over the eastern Mediterranean basin. She had established her position permanently (in the manner of England today) by taking possession of a number of important *points d'appui* — Dalmatia, Corfu, Crete, and Cyprus. In the North Sea and the Baltic there reigned, with nearly as absolute a supremacy, the Hanse, that curious merchant-organization which — existing purely on the basis of private agreements, with no territorial sovereign as its champion, and needing to draw the sword only on rare occasions — exercised for a century and a half supreme commercial dictatorship over vast stretches of land and water. And between these two giant powers of North and South a whole crowd of smaller, though by no means unimportant, centres of commerce developed. From upper Italy a busy route ran along the Rhine to Flanders, France, and England — which was then in a wholly backward condition. (The Hanse merchants used to say: "We buy a foxskin from the Englishman for a groschen and sell him back the brush for a guilder.") In the West there arose a cluster of flourishing seaports, in middle Germany a ring of thriving craft-towns — cloth towns, beer towns, silk towns, or herring towns — from Gothland to Naples a bee-like activity of hammering, weaving, haggling, and loading.

Rise of the guilds

Mediæval society had taken its physiognomy from the knight and the priest. But now it was the three realistic callings which came into prominence: the burgher and the craftsman set the tone, and even the peasant began to realize that he was somebody. This revolution of social values was brought about in the first place through the gradual rise of the guilds. We have already alluded to the very general collapse of the so-called "generations" (*Geschlechter*) — families constituting a sort of middle-class nobility — in the course of the fourteenth century. They were the old, the blasé, the lazy heirs, the dull-witted "back numbers." The guildsmen, on the contrary, were the moderns of their day, capable of assimilating the meaning of the life-forces which were preparing to take over the mastery. In politics they were national and anti-clerical. It was from their ranks that artists came. They met everything new with intelligent sympathy, whether it were the principles of finance or the doctrines of mysticism. They produced the infantry, the arm of the future. They fought for work and enlightenment, for lay Christianity, and for people's rights. They pursued a sober, narrow, but sound and pious middle-class policy and were in the true sense Christian Socialists.

Professional dilettantism

Their organization was still wholly patriarchal. They were no mere association of economic interests, but an ethical union. The apprentice entered not only the business, but the family of his master, who was as responsible for his pupil's moral guidance as for his technical training. Similarly the individual member's relation to his guild was less that of a judicial subjection than of piety. It was a matter of honour rather than of economics to turn out good work. On the other hand, the guild regarded it as its most important duty pledged to find adequate markets for its members and to provide care and nourishment in case of illness or disablement. Social gatherings in special meeting-rooms, corporate festivities and processions, particular forms of salutation, and guild customs strengthened the bond. In time, however, this fine spirit of fellowship inevitably degenerated into a niggling guardship and rigid lifeless routine, so that even today this sort of thing is contemptuously called "guildish" (*zünftlerisch*). Everything was scrupulously regulated, from speech-making and drinking of healths to the number of apprentices and the size of the shops. No apprentice might go out for his glass of beer before the bells struck three. Not more than six guilders were to be lost at play in one evening. Only personally finished articles were to be sold, so as to prevent the development of wholesale businesses. The workshop must give on to the street so that the work should be always open to inspection. No new work might be taken on before earlier orders had been completed. Delicate work was to be done by daylight only. All well-meant and sensible rules, but intolerably cramping in the long run. Above all, there was no possibility of grasping the broader implications of things or of organically combining opposing factors. These are the invariable drawbacks of an outlook which concentrates on immediate realities. Life in those days moved in a heavy armour of form and formulæ, forced into that armour by a professional dilettantism that set itself against brains. Everywhere one sees a dogged clinging to the solid material of existence, without creative freedom, productiveness, or genius. Yet in its own domain this materialism won great victories. It was an age of loyal, conscientious, and artistic handling of materials, of endowing material with dignity and beauty, of respect and veneration for the object that was being fashioned, such as we of today can hardly imagine, an age of craftsmen who brought more inventive genius, affection, and originality to bear on a lock or a wardrobe than is devoted to one of our modern luxury buildings. It was the *heroic age of Philistinism.*

Dawn of Rationalism

A growing sense of actuality usually tends to bring a certain rationalization and increased purposefulness into the business of living, and we can detect at this stage the first, though quite modest, attempts to master the problems of life scientifically. In the domain of nature-research confusion still reigned. Valuable discoveries of all sorts were made, but they were not co-ordinated, and even so thorough and many-sided a thinker as Regiomontanus impresses us as a learned collector of curiosities who stores his precious finds side by side as unsystematically as the veriest amateur. Konrad von Megenberg's *Buch der Natur,* again, a sort of zoölogical text-book, is remarkably good in point of systematic arrangement, but has not emancipated its pictures and text from fabulous creatures — dragons, winged horses, mermaids, sphinxes, centaurs, fire-breathing dogs, and the like. In fact, the only sphere in which a fertile and unbroken empirical tradition ruled was that of craftsmanship. By dint of experimenting and perfecting, there came into existence a whole army of exquisite trifles and playthings: highly original clocks and locks, artificial waterworks, delicate instruments for goldsmith's work, and magnificent organs. But there was no scientific intention behind them, only the idea of making existence more ornamental and comfortable. In finance, too, the feeling for numerical exactitude gained strength only slowly. In the main the methods used were primitive and summary. Errors in reckoning were so common that no one worried about them. The idea of checking one's calculations was entirely lacking, the use of zero as a positional number was unknown. Reckoning was done with the clumsy and unreliable abacus. Division was an art which practically no one had mastered. Arithmetical work was a process of trial and error — that is, various results were tried in turn until one that appeared fairly plausible was obtained. Memory for figures, which we regard today as a matter of course, was then quite undeveloped.

In the field of history considerable progress was made. The need of recording present and recapitulating past events was generally felt. Archives were established and almost every town had its chronicle. Froissart, the " French Herodotus," is of course an outstanding and exceptional figure, but that such a figure could arise at all is significant of the age. In his work we have the first appearance of the specifically Gallic art of the raconteur in all its fullness, the richly coloured picture-book narrative bathed in the aroma of the time and moving with an even flow. He resembles Herodotus, too, in being a chronicler of actuals, a lover of the *histoire intime,* anecdote, and interesting gossip, one who makes world-history his own private affair and trusts his own eyes and ears more than the " sources." His opposite to a certain extent is Marsilius of Padua — that prototype of the suspicious, clear-sighted, dogmatic polyhistor, who was also doctor, lay preacher, and lawyer, creator of the modern theory of the State, and author of the antipapal *Defensor pacis,* the very model of the political pamphlet.

Poetry of actuality

But the strongest and most eloquent monument of the awakening Realism is in the poetic literature of the era. We have already mentioned the great expansion of satirical writing. Now, satire is always in itself a realistic form of literature. To attain its object it must go into facts, into concrete, individual traits of all sorts, not only in detail and precisely, but also, so to say, caressingly. Allied to the satirical carnival plays were the morality plays, so popular all over Europe. These were instructive shows in which the vices and virtues figured — at first, indeed, merely as dry allegories, but even so valuable for the high lights they threw on actual conditions. The very passion-plays had their regular burlesque scenes, which afforded ample opportunity for seeing life at its gayest and crudest, and certainly did not shock the undeveloped taste of the day. In France the " farce " made its appearance, and in it we find all the components of its modern counterpart. Indeed, *Maitre Pathelin,* the most famous of this type, contains all Molière in embryo. Even the epic was moving in the direction of didactic character-drawing, although nothing on the Continent reached the classic height of the *Canterbury Tales,* in which Chaucer, the " English Homer," painted a full and many-coloured map of English society, complete with all its shades and grades, its transitions and mixtures. So clearly are the pilgrims, their modes, their features, and their dress depicted in this work that, as

Dryden says, one might have supped with them at the "Tabard" in Southwark.

The development of lyric poetry is marked by a sudden new blossoming of folk-song. Everywhere there burst out founts of song. Everyone sang: the miller, the travelling scholar, the mountaineer, the merry peasant, the fisherman, the hunter, the landsknecht, even the priest. And everything took on the form of song: love, mockery, mourning, worship, sociability. The story told in verse passed into the concentrated form of the ballad. A contemplating objectivity, a tangible corporeality, prevailed everywhere. The stones of ruined castles began to talk, the lime-tree swayed sadly in the wind, the hazel-bush warned the lovesick maiden to have a care. Thenceforward, indeed, the maiden is always in the centre of the picture in the new poetry, whereas it had been almost always the married lady who figured in the lyric of chivalry. The poet no longer languished for love of his unapproachable, disdainful lady, but sang of the wooed-and-won, the intrigue, the bedfellow; and love's lament turns far more frequently on the inconstancy of the suitor gratified than on the coldness of the desired lady. That is, the tragic figure is not the unhappy lover, but the deserted sweetheart; and the author of the poem is no longer the high-born singer, but the travelling player — a much cruder, more realistic, and more popular figure. His rhymes and tales are concise, concentrated, and to the point. The anecdote, too, began to enjoy great popularity; also the *aperçu*. Those verbal arrows of the Beghards already described were obviously nothing but pregnant aphorisms, keen-edged bons mots. In no other age has there been such a wealth of excellent proverbs, or so much space and importance allotted to them in the economy of life and thought. In the realm of the arts of form the pendant to the folk-song is found in the miniature painting, which caught and fixed the whole life of the period in tiny genre pictures, as telling as they are primitive.

Emancipation

Rationalist currents are apt to draw emancipation movements after them, and these now became a prominent feature of the age. Each individual wanted to be his own master. We see it everywhere: in the watchword of kings, "Freedom from Rome!" that of the princes, "Freedom from the Empire!" that of the towns, "Freedom from the sovereign!" and that of the serfs,

" Freedom from the soil! " Serfdom, however, was never actually abolished, but dissolved very gradually of itself. Social liberations are never really accomplished by decrees, which are equally ridiculous whether they come from above or below — the imperial-royal patent of the textbook-kaiser Joseph was as infantine an act as the proclamation of the Rights of Man in Paris — but they occur automatically and irresistibly at the moment when the spirit of the age demands that they should. Where the soil-bound serfs vanished, their liberation was not due to a tempestuous rising: it was simply that all at once they were no longer there. They crumbled away — into the towns. Once a reasonably dense nucleus is formed anywhere, no power on earth can prevent the molecules from straining towards it. They gravitate towards this centre of forces as inevitably as a meteor falls into a sun.

Radical emancipation from *all* political, social, and economic fetters was championed, as we have seen, by the Beghards (whom today we should probably call idealist-communists), by the Hussites, whose battle-cry was " No mine, no thine! " and by the mass of work-shy proletarians, that motley company of vagabonds, recruited from the derailed of every conceivable rank and profession. The *Roman de la Rose,* perhaps the most widely read book of its day, goes so far as to preach *sexual* communism:

Nature n'est pas si sote
Qu'ele féist nostre Marote.
Ains nous a fait, biau filz n'en doutes,
Toutes por tous et tous por toutes,
Chascune por chascun commune,
Et chascun commun por chascune.

Decay of chivalry

The subjective side of materialism expresses itself in a steadily increasing plebeianism. Manners and customs, speech and gesture, everything which goes to make up the inner melody of life, became coarser, ruder, more vulgar, and more direct. This was in part the result of the upthrusting of the lower social orders, but in *all* classes the colouring became more brutal and sensual. Even knights were knights no longer. Loyalty, honour, " gentleness," " steadfastness," moderation: these had been the virtues extolled in the courtly age of poetry. Now a complete change had set in.

A nobleman, if not simply a robber, became a superior (or, rather, an inferior) peasant, or a troublesome swashbuckler. Up till then the problems of love, of *Minne,* had been his chief concern: courts of love, rules of love, deeds and sufferings in honour of the chosen one — nonsense perhaps, but definitely idealist. Whenever two or three junkers had met together, these had been their topics, or, if not these, religion and poetry. Now they began to discuss the very things which to this day form the almost exclusive topics of junkers: horses, wenches, duels, and corn prices. Geiler von Kaisersberg wrote: " only the name of nobility remains; those who bear it have nothing of the thing itself. It is a nutshell, without a kernel, but full of worms; an egg without a yolk. No virtue, no wisdom, no piety, no love for the State, no human courtesy . . . they are dissipated, arrogant, hasty, and as to the rest of the vices, they are more addicted to them than anyone else."

This it was which destroyed chivalry, and not, as is often asserted, the invention of gunpowder. For, firstly, the knights were not dispossessed by the new forms of warfare, but by their own narrow-mindedness and haughtiness, which kept them from adapting themselves in time to the new conditions; and, secondly, the use of fire-arms was only very slowly established. Already the Mongol armies of Ogdai Khan who descended on eastern Europe in the first half of the thirteenth century had brought with them on to the field of battle little field-guns from China. In the middle of that century Marcus Græcus prepared an accurate recipe for making gunpowder, and the great Schoolman Roger Bacon, his contemporary, declared it to be the most effective means of destruction. But Europeans were not yet ripe for it and, although they already possessed it, had to have it rediscovered for them by Berthold Schwarz nearly a century later. At Crécy in 1346 the English shot leaden pieces, " frightening man and beast," and in the same year a gun was made at Aachen to " shoot thunder." In 1331, three years before Schwarz made his experiments, the Arabs had used gunpowder artillery at the siege of Alicante. But, even so, it was another century and a half before the fire-arm became the dominant weapon. Obviously, therefore, the knights had had ample time to reconsider their position. Instead, they blindly tinkered at the old system and made it more and more rigid and one-sided. They covered themselves entirely with strips and plates, their joints were protected by chain-mail, their heads by helmets with movable visors; not a square inch of their body was left exposed. Thus equipped, they became perambulating fortresses, tanks on horseback. Yet the very fact of their being mounted made the whole apparatus useless, for the horses could not be as thoroughly protected, and if they went on foot they were about as mobile as a tortoise. On the disastrous field of Sempach, following the contemporary fashion of upturned shoe-points, their feet were encased in absurd steel boots in which they could hardly waddle.

This battle was won by Arnold von Winkelried. They say, indeed, that the story of his heroic deed arose at a much later date. But research of this sort merely does the superficial tidying-up of the history of nations. The saga is completely true — as true, in the higher sense, as any story can be. Winkelried was the whole Confederation in person when he seized and broke that sheaf of Austrian spears, that bundle of knightly insolence and incompetence, of Habsburg tyranny, of inhumanity that deemed itself the flower of humanity. It was the first uprising of a nemesis for the heartlessness, injustice, and selfishness of a puffed-up adventurer caste. The new Will conquered in a peasant embodiment, but the true herditary enemy and conqueror of feudalism resided elsewhere. For there now arose out of the dark background of the age the stronghold of the new spirit, that mysterious phenomenon of light and shade, the *town*.

The great transvaluation

There had been towns, of course, from the beginning of the second millennium, and indeed throughout the Middle Ages. But it was now that for the first time they strengthened themselves for the domination of all existence. What is a town? Actually it can only be defined negatively as the sharpest possible contrast to "the country." The peasant's life is vegetative and organic, the townsman's cerebral and mechanical; in the country, man is a natural product of his environment, in the town the environment is an artificial product of man.

In a town everything is different. Men's faces take on a hitherto unknown expression — drawn, strained, and at once weary and excited; movements become hastier and more impatient, but also more definitely directed and purposeful; an entirely new tempo, a queer staccato, make their appearance. And the whole landscape, too, becomes transformed. The town, with its capricious, bizarre, unnatural forms that, consciously or unconsciously, emphasize the contrast with the nature-grown and nature-moulded "landscape" around it, at once dominates the perspective. Forest, field, and village sink to mere accessories, provide the decoration and staging. Everything takes its cue from this heart-organ which controls the whole circulation of the political and economic life of the neighbourhood. The legislation of the later mediæval towns already illustrates this relentless will to become the dominating central organ that absorbs into itself everything whatever that it can reach. Through the protectionist system, whereby the surrounding population was forbidden to ply any trade or to produce any articles which were manufactured in the town, a complete monopoly was created; and the staple laws, by forcing every merchant who passed through to expose his wares for sale and submit to having them priced by the magistrate, countenanced something very near highway robbery.

The birth of the town is identical in all ages with the birth of modern man. It is not surprising, therefore, that those features which are definitely characteristic of the age should be most strongly marked in the towns. Take, for instance, materialism. One of its expressions is responsible for the extreme egotism of every individual town, which is a microcosm that takes no account of anything but itself, feels itself alone entitled to live, and regards everything outside as auxiliary to its welfare. Every non-citizen is a natural enemy, if for no better reason than that he does not belong to the town. As town life is essentially more complicated and labile, it easily becomes a breeding-place for every kind of neurosis. At the same time it is a more conscious, sober, considered form of existence, more rationalistic and more reactive to all kinds of emancipation. Even before the end of the Middle Ages there was a saying current that town air had a liberating effect, and as liberty is apt to engender a certain equality (or at least an assimilation) among the various forms of life, it was naturally in the towns that there first arose those waves of plebeianism which were soon to invade all ranks of society.

Picturesque filth

Every such town is nothing but a fortress-area, a product of the intention of maximum security outside and maximum self-sufficingness inside. The complications and chicanes of its fortification — ditches and ramparts, gates and towers, curtains and boulevards, sally-bridges and machicoulis — imparted to the outer silhouette of the town the picturesqueness that is so admired; but the inner profile was even more picturesque. As the streets were very seldom built in straight lines, but were mostly crooked and winding, there arose innumerable angles and bays, corners and irregularities, and the rows of houses crossed, crowded, and broke into each other with chaotic effect. Further, it was the custom to allow the upper stories to project in front so that the first floor leaned forward over the ground-floor and often supported a second story with a still greater overhang. These projections, which were embellished with quaint little gables and turrets, no doubt looked very well, but they made the streets narrow, airless, and dark. The fact that wood was still the predominating material alone made this style of building possible; but this in turn led to constant outbreaks of fire on a large scale. On the ground level there were always a number of workshops and market stalls which took possession of the street and often almost completely obstructed the traffic. Even the cellars thrust out their " necks " into the street. The pavements were wretched, or, rather, mostly non-existent, and the dirt and mud were such that no one unprovided with heavy wooden shoes could cross the road without sinking in. Chimneys were unknown. The gutters were of so primitive a type that they emptied their contents into the street; a gutter also ran down the middle of the road. A regular feature of the house was its imposing dungheap, which arose in front of the door. In the main squares stood a draw-well, usually a most unhygienic object. Then, too, the practice obtained of throwing everything out on the street: refuse, filth, or dead animals. Worst of all were the living animals, however, the oxen, the cows, the geese, the sheep, and the pigs, which were driven through the street in herds and broke into strange houses uninvited. Roofs were often only thatched. Façades were unadorned, bare, and forlorn; it was only in isolated cases that they were beautified by carving and painting. Windows were not yet glazed and either had no protection, or were merely covered wth a screen of rags or oiled paper. Evidently, then, the exteriors of the towns in those days were not quite as romantic as we sometimes imagine. Most of all would a passer-by today be struck by the total lack of illumination. There were no street lamps, no light-diffusing shop-windows, no illuminated public clocks, and the reflection of the dim tallow candles, resinous twigs, or vegetable-oil lamps within the houses did not penetrate to the street. Walking out at night meant either carrying one's own lantern or hiring a linkman. Only when a potentate or high dignitary of some sort honoured the town with a visit was illumination provided. After nine o'clock everything fell into slumber, the only people left afoot being the homeless, the waylayers in their hiding-places, and the drinkers and card-players in the taverns.

Oriental tumult

By day, on the other hand, life was immensely various and mobile — perpetual coming and going, measuring and weighing, working and gossiping. A weird symphony composed of all imaginable noises filled the streets. Every few minutes there would be bell-ringing and singing of hymns, which mingled with the roaring and grunting of the live-stock, the bawling and brawling of the idlers in the taverns, the hammering, planing, and tapping of workers in the open shops, the rattle of carts and stamping of draught-animals, and, finally, the melodious sound of the many hawkers who, in an age of universal illiteracy, had to find a substitute for the poster and advertised their heterogeneous wares, from needles and pins to bacon pasties, with all the picturesqueness of a varied vocabulary.

Men were very matutinal in those days, and all this stir began betimes, in summer at four, in winter at five. By three o'clock, however, the reign of leisure usually set in. If we add to these optical and aural impressions the curious medley of smells that pervaded such a town: the hot fat of the bacon cakes mentioned above, the sizzling sausages, the steaming workshops, which, as we have seen, all gave on to the street, the fuming tar-boilers that stood in the centre of the town, the manure heaps and cow-dung, the scattered fruit, flower, and vegetable stalls, and the incense from the many churches, we shall have a picture not unlike those offered by oriental cities to this day.

Standard of living

The standard of comfort and convenience was very modest according to our ideas. Staircases were dark, labyrinthine, and awkward; floors and walls were seldom covered; furniture was limited to the indispensable articles. There was, however, a certain luxury in the matter of ornamental pottery. The boards were graced with carved beakers, jugs, and cans; the kitchens of the well-to-do glistened with copper kettles and pewter vessels. Beds were broad and soft and usually had a canopy; feather-beds were in general use, but night garments were unknown — people slept stark naked. Neither had the useful fork been invented. Meat was cut up with a knife, unless previously carved, and eaten with the fingers; for vegetables and sauces a spoon was used. Flowerpots and the bird-cage were part of the equipment of every self-respecting household. Pictures were a rarity, vermin, on the contrary, everywhere abundant. The " stink chambers," as closets were then called, were in an anything but desirable condition; on the other hand there were public — very public — conveniences in existence. Still, generally speaking, the feeling for cleanliness was highly developed. A large part of social life centred in the public bathing-establishments, where people went to eat and drink, play dice, make music, and, of course, make love. Rich folk had their own baths, where they held receptions for their friends. Other opportunities for entertainment were afforded by the drinking-rooms of the guild-houses, the public dances and archery meetings, Shrove Tuesday, the fairs, Christmas, Midsummer day, and festivities in connexion with the visits of princes.

In striking contrast to the poverty of private dwellings, however, there was the splendour of the public buildings: the artistic fountains and gates, the magnificent churches with their cupolas, sculptures, and giant spires, the town halls with their picturesque roofs and stained glass, spacious *Ratskeller* and bright assembly-rooms, the cloth-halls, corn-exchanges, shoemakers' halls, dance-houses and wine-houses — richness and splendour at every turn.

The open roads

The focal points of mediæval traffic had been the village (or the farm) and the monastery, which in a certain sense corresponded to the town. The larger monasteries embraced a very considerable area and housed many hundreds of people — not only the monks, but laymen seeking asylum, schoolchildren, and innumerable artisans and servants. The famous monastery of St. Gall had a stud-farm, a brewery, a bakery, a dairy, a sheep-pen; workshops for saddlers, cobblers, fullers, sword-cutters, and goldsmiths; fruit, vegetable, and herb gardens; a schoolhouse, a novices' house, a hospital, a bath-house, a " blood-letting and purging " house, a pilgrims' lodging-house, and beside it (starred in Baedeker, so to say) a hospice for travellers of quality.

It is typical of the plebeian character of the new era that two very different foci now developed. These were the town and the *road*. There were, indeed, as yet no proper highways, the roads being in as forlorn a condition as the streets in towns. The magnificent Roman roads which had been so extensively laid down had fallen into decay, and the only available routes were broad field-tracks which had acquired a certain definiteness of direction from being much ridden and driven over. But, bad as they were, a dense and turbulent stream of traffic passed continuously over them. And a very picturesque clinical picture such a road must have presented, a revealing snapshot of the whole period, a caravan of fluctuating groups. There were monks and nuns, scholars and apprentices, mercenaries and pugilists, Beghards and Béguines, Flagellants and strolling players, pedlars and treasure-seekers, gipsies and Jews, quacks and exorcists, home pilgrims and pilgrims whose palm branches showed that they came from the Holy Land. Beggars there were of every speciality: the *Valkenträger,* who wore a painted bloody arm in a sling; the *Grautener* or sham epileptics, the sham blind, the mothers with hired cripple children, and many more. Then there were the race of variety performers, the so-called *joculatores,* including acrobats, clowns, dancers, jugglers, fire-eaters, animal ventriloquists, animal-trainers with their dogs or goats or guinea-pigs — and all these creatures were "organized." The habit of associations was indeed one of the most marked signs of the time. It pervaded all professions, all activities, and all forms of life. There were thieves' and beggars' fraternities, heretic societies, and anti-swearing and health-drinking unions; even the prostitutes and the lepers had their "works councils." Corporations had supplanted the vanished "estates," but while the latter had been a natural growth, corporations were definitely manufactured and stood in the same relation to the estates as artificial to natural flower-species.

The Holy Fehme

The most sensational product of the community spirit was that mediæval institution the *Fehme,* which to this day is wrapped in romance and mystery, although the facts prove it to have been a most Philistine and prosaic form of justice. For as a matter of fact the Fehmic courts held their sittings, neither in sinister mummery nor in underground vaults, but quite publicly and in the open country by daylight. Those mysterious doings of which so much has been made consisted in nothing more than a few secret signs of greeting and recognition, scrupulously guarded by the members in much the same way as freemasons now guard theirs. The procedure of the court was rough and primitive, the sentence depending simply upon the number of sworn guarantors who appeared for or against the accused; and as the "initiated," or members of the Fehme, were naturally able to enrol such witnesses more easily, applications poured in, anyone of untainted reputation being eligible. Undeniably, however, the Fehme constituted in a sense a supplement to the regular forms of justice, which were both feeble and biased. In many ways the latter were indeed more brutal. The only form of death sentence inflicted by the Fehme was that of hanging, and even that in the majority of cases was not carried out; but the public courts passed the most savage sentences on most crimes (among them some which are comparatively small and in no sense "criminal" according to our ideas): coiners were suffocated, adulteresses buried alive, traitors drawn and quartered, slanderers branded, murderers broken on the wheel or flayed; blasphemers and perjurers had their tongues torn out, brawlers their hand or ear cut off. None of these punishments, it should be added, were carried out consistently, for in general the judicial procedure of the time was wanting in both logic and continuity.

Erotic driven out by sexuality

The tone of the age was thoroughly coarse. Even in the highest circles swearing, belching, and suchlike crudities were quite normal. Phrases like "A bad year come to thee!" "The plague take thee!" or "Hell fire burn thee up!" were mere currency. Now, it is simply the prevailing mode of the time which decides where naturalness becomes shocking — in more civilized centuries than our own it will, no doubt, be considered scandalous that we misused our social gatherings for the unappetizing process of taking nourishment together. A preference for clumpiness, compactness, and massiveness prevailed in all things. As to the relations of the sexes, eroticism had been driven out by sexuality. Woman was no longer an ideal, a higher being, a fairy-tale come true, but a means of enjoyment. It is very significant that, just at this time, men's clothing was more extravagant in colour and cut than women's. A man decked himself out like a salmon, a turkey-cock, or a bird of paradise that puts on its courting or "wedding"-

clothes. The standpoint was purely the *animal.* To place woman in the position of a mere sex object was in one sense to lower, but in another to elevate her; for the Middle Ages had made of her so apotheosized an object that she became degraded into a doll, a lure, or an expensive plaything and stood as completely outside life as does the American woman of today. But now she at least stood wholly on earth and became a human being. She was infected by the general urge towards emancipation, her attitude was bolder, her rightful position in the family and in public was acknowledged: indeed, she may be said in the period to have held the spiritual and moral primacy. She took part in all the religious and scientific efforts of the day — a point to which we shall return when we come to talk about mysticism.

The culture of the table

Eating and drinking naturally played a great rôle in so material a period, and here, too, truly vulgar standards of taste prevailed. The chief desideratum was that all dishes should have a sting, and the result was a prodigality of seasoning which more differentiated palates would find intolerable. Indiscriminate use was made of cinnamon, pepper, rhubarb, calomel, onion, nutmeg, ginger, saffron, and the like. Cloves, lemons, and raisins were used where a modern cook would not hear of them. Even as a snack between meals, " spice powder," a mixture of pepper and sugar toasted on bread, was popular. As regards quantity, there was undoubtedly heavier consumption than in our day, but not to the exaggerated extent that we imagine. This would be a typical menu for instance: first course, eggs (beaten up with peppercorns, saffron and honey), millet, vegetables, mutton with onions, roast chicken with prunes; second course, stockfish with oil and raisins; bream fried in oil, stewed eel with pepper, broiled herrings with mustard; pickled bait, baked "*Parmen*" (according to Sturtevant, apples in butter), small birds (roasted in dripping) with radishes, leg of pork with cucumber. Or, to take another: first, mutton and chickens in milk of almonds, roast sucking-pig, geese, carp and pike, a pasty; then, roast venison with pepper sauce, rice with sugar, trout stewed with ginger, flat cakes with sugar; and, lastly, roast goose and chicken stuffed with eggs, carp and pike, cake. These menus cannot be regarded as over-luxurious, seeing that they were designed for special feasts, nor will the separate dishes in the courses be considered too numerous if we bear in mind that they were offered for selection like our still more various hors d'œuvres; one took a helping of one, and another of another, but only the real glutton sampled them all. It is from the standpoint of a modern gourmet that the combinations are so barbarous; in particular the little birds (presumably sparrows) in dripping with radishes must have tasted atrocious. Everyday meals were quite plain, even in well-to-do families. A guest from our epoch would probably miss sugar more than anything, for this was still a very costly article, used only on special occasions and as medicine. Then the fare included practically no vegetables, or, at the most, cabbage or millet. Green peas were considered a delicacy; rice was known, but did not often figure. Above all, there were lacking the two items without which we can hardly imagine a meal: soup and potatoes.

A good deal of drink — principally beer — was regularly consumed, especially in Germany. Wine was sour and badly kept, and honey and spices were added to improve it. The tasty Southern wines were drunk only as *apéritifs,* even by the rich. In general, wine was treated with respect and more in the light of a medicine: as a purgative, an opiate, an aid to digestion, and at the same time a gift of God.

The world-nightmare

We now come to one of the most important characteristics of the age, which we will call *diabolism* or *Satanism.* Human beings, or at least many of them, had at that time something diabolical about them. And there was something diabolical also in the external events which beat in on them. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many of these deranged and frightened creatures became obsessed with the idea that Antichrist had obtained the mastery and that the reign of evil which preluded the Day of Judgment had already set in. The fundamental feeling which possessed them is perhaps best explained by the term " world-nightmare." Outward impressions and events affected them like a huge, monstrous nightmare, an evil ghostly dream. Tortured humanity moved in a perpetual fear-neurosis, which a fear-inspired chase after riches and pleasure could only deaden by spasms. In their very exterior the men and women of that time betrayed their devastated condition. They were, to our ideas, frankly ugly, being either lean and emaciated or spongy and bloated, sometimes grotesquely combining the two extremes; as when a ponderous belly was supported on thin legs, and fat bosoms were surmounted by shrunken faces. Their eyes have a strange fixed and frightened expression, the look of a person hypnotized by some terrible vision. They carried themselves either heavily and coarsely, or with an awkward embarrassed air, betraying either an exaggerated shyness or its reverse, a brutality that tried to outface the inner fear.

The fourfold pincers

The political conditions were chaotic to the point of madness. The diplomacy of most rulers was characterized by mere blind greed, which incited them to seize the best of the pickings without a thought for the welfare of others, or even for their own immediate future — and this at a time when the pressure closing in on them from all sides was rising to the horrible. Middle Europe seemed to be in the clutches of a polypus. In each of the four quarters a menacing pair of pincers was waiting to tear the Continent to pieces. In the east there was the Slav menace — Lithuania united to Poland under the Jagellons, a monster empire stretching to the Black Sea and embracing, in addition to its homelands, Galicia, Volhynia, Podolia, Red Russia, the Ukraine, and (since the defeat of the Teutonic Order at Tannenberg) West and East Prussia. In the north lay the powerful combination of the three Scandinavian kingdoms, the Union of Kalmar. In the west was the new great power of the Dukes of Burgundy, intent on breaking off ever larger portions of the German empire. Above all, from the south came the onset of the Turks, that uniquely constituted nation which devoted all its manifestations of life to the exclusive purpose of military conquests; conquests in pursuit of no religious, national, or social aim, but simply conquests as such; a nation not growing organically, like a vital substance which absorbs and assimilates things around it, but inorganically spreading itself without meaning or defined limits, much as a crystal grows by "apposition." The Osmanli owed their victories primarily to the dual qualities of simplicity and firmness in their organization, which made it unique in its day. Subordinate to the Sultan were the two *beylerbeys* (lord of lords) of Asia and Europe; subordinate to them in turn were the beys of individual sanjaks; subordinate to these the *alaï beys* (brigadiers) and to these again the *timarlis,* holders of the smaller fiefs. The Sultan had, therefore, but to give the signal for this colossal standing army to be set in motion. Even for a student of today it is queerly disquieting to follow the Turkish conquest as it eats its way further and further into Europe. But its contemporaries seem for a considerable period to have regarded it with no very great alarm. Only rarely did they pull themselves together for vigorous action and never for combined efforts. The western powers made their help conditional on the submission of the Eastern Church to the Roman, and while precious time was filtered away in hair-splitting disputes over the conditions of the union, the Turkish advance progressed like a torrent. In 1361 they conquered Adrianople; a generation later they destroyed the kingdom of Greater Serbia in the terrible battle of Kossovo. In the same year Sultan Bayazid (known as *Il derim,* the Flash of Lightning) mounted the throne and shortly afterwards, at Nicopolis, won a decisive victory over a crusading army which had at last been got together. He swore an oath that he would not rest until he had turned the altar of St. Peter's into a crib for his horse. About half a century later the fall of Constantinople struck terror in the whole of western Europe. In another five years came the occupation of Athens, which was followed in the course of the next decade by that of Bosnia, Wallachia, and Albania. The Turks had now firmly established themselves as rulers of the Balkans and were reaching out towards Hungary.

The Luxemburg comet

In central Europe, from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century, the House of Luxemburg held sway. It was a strange race, bigoted and godless, foolhardy and vacillating, politically shrewd and spiritually diseased, which rose like a gorgeous comet in that universal night of a declining age, only to lose itself as abruptly in the darkness. It was but an interlude in German and European history, but a very curious one, for when one comes to think of it, had its bold far-reaching schemes been carried out to the end, the dynasty would today have a power such as no other in Europe has ever achieved. But the Luxemburgs wanted too much, and therein precisely lay the root of their eventual failure. They aimed at nothing less than a union of the three groups of countries which later formed the Austrian and the Prussian, and had previously been the Bohemian spheres of expansion. They carried on at the same time enough schemes to make dynastic policies for a Habsburg, a Hohenzollern, and an Ottokar together. Their plans were laid on too large a scale, like mammoth buildings which are never finished; their political imagination, true to its period, suffered from elephantiasis.

The reign of the first Luxemburger, Charles IV, is brightened by a wise and beneficent encouragement of science and art, and above all by the dazzling apparition of Rienzi, the " last of the tribunes," a fiery fantast belonging to the family of picturesque adventurers who leave no permanent traces in history and yet impress themselves more deeply on the memory than their most productive contemporaries. Rienzi had something of the genius's uncompromising directness and breadth in his ideas, which imposed itself on all; on the other hand, he had an undisciplined, sweeping immoderateness which caused him only too soon to transgress the bounds of possibility and brought him to his downfall. But his grandiose dreams of the rebirth of Rome's former greatness, of the restoration of a European world-empire, did not die with him; he still lives in the long line of shining fabulous beings whose portraits, falsified by legend, fertilize our imagination better than a hundred " epoch-making " facts from real history.

The last of the Luxemburgs, Sigismund, also achieved legendary fame, though of a very different nature, through his betrayal of Huss, whom he is said to have lured to his death by a letter of safe-conduct. Actually his behaviour constituted no breach of the law according to the views of the time, and there is no record of a single important contemporary raising this accusation — and this though the Council was attacked right and left in judicial, political, and even theological circles. But here, too, is a case where we are bound to accept the unhistoric, people's view as the truer one. For, in a higher and deeper sense, he did act in bad faith when he set himself against the progressive forces of the heart of his own nuclear land and — be the legal rights of the matter what they may — permitted the fall of the man who embodied the will of the people. We can see him before us, the old hypocrite, leaning this way and that, seeking shallow compromises, now persuading Huss to give in, now flattering the princes of the Church; the voluptuous fop and corrupt rhetorician with his red forked beard, the connoisseur of brilliant witticisms, elegant courtesans, and delectable fish dishes; smooth, hollow, without aim or conviction, hatred or love, a totally *unreal* person, a glittering, polished cipher.

Crowned paranoiacs

It is a remarkable thing that at one point in that period there should have been two mad kings reigning almost simultaneously. These were Charles VI of France (1380–1422), and Wenceslas (1378–1419). The latter was a grotesque dæmonic sadist and alcoholic maniac. One day when his cook spoilt the dinner, he had him roasted on the spit. Another time he sent for the executioner and said he just wanted to know how a man felt who was about to be beheaded. He thereupon bared his neck, bandaged his eyes, knelt down, and ordered the executioner to cut off his head. The man just touched the King's neck with his sword. Wenceslas then made him kneel down, bandaged his eyes, and severed his head at one blow. Meeting a monk one day when hunting, he drew his bow and shot him dead, remarking to his suite: "That's an odd head of game that I've shot." These monstrous doings led someone to write on a wall: "Wenceslas, old Nero." Wenceslas wrote underneath it: "*Si non fui adhuc, ero.*" (All these details are noted by Dynter, ambassador to his court in 1413.) It is common knowledge that he had John of Nepomuk, the future national hero of the Czechs, drowned in the Moldau, apparently because he would not betray to him the secret told in the confessional by his wife — clearly one of those manifestations of jealousy which are a regular concomitant of alcoholic mania. At the same time he was an extremely clever, a too cunning, diplomat, always provided with altogether excellent reasons for his actions — here, it is rather the *folie raisonnante* that we seem to be dealing with. Besides these two madmen there were two imbeciles, Henry VI of England, who was notoriously so, and Frederick III, who was certainly not far removed from it, a Kaiser who ruled — or, rather, did not rule — over Germany for fifty-three years in complete apathy, childishly dreaming his life away. When the news of Constantinople's fall reached Germany, a German chronicler wrote: "The Kaiser sits at home, gardening and catching little birds, the poor creature!"

English French chaos

The histories of England and France during this period cannot be studied separately, as they were almost incessantly intermingled. They present a grim picture of bloodthirsty feuds, treacherous murders, broken promises, and the lowest depths of political vileness. Shakspere surrounded the actors in these horrors with a mystifying aura of narcotic dæmony, causing them to gleam with a strange snake-like iridescence, at once repulsive and alluring. His histories are the sparkling ride to hell of a whole generation, which, hunted pathetically from superlative heroism to animal baseness and back, rushes irretrievably on to the abyss it has made for itself. Of course he magically heightens the actuality, yet something of all this was in fact inherent in the times. These men affect us like certain gorgeous toadstools or those evil flesh-eating orchids, whose cruelty and cunning radiate a conciliatory aroma of mysterious beauty.

For over a century the *wars of succession* raged, brought about by the claim of English kings to the throne of France — an unnerving alternation of advances and retreats by the English, who achieved brilliant victories and frequently occupied large portions of France, but yet never succeeded in establishing themselves permanently, and were finally left with the bridge-head of Calais as their sole possession. The turning-point came with Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, as unreal an apparition as Sigismund, though in exactly the opposite sense. She was a transcendental being, living entirely in that world of the spirit — of which the existence is denied by shallow empiricists because it cannot be positively demonstrated — by which human history is at all times affected and determined.

The internal history also of the two countries is as bloody as it is confused. In England there were the Wars of the Roses, which took on that inhuman character that is the rule in struggles between near relations, and side by side with them the cruel persecutions of the Lollards, Wyclif's supporters. France had its citizen revolts in Paris, and a great insurrection of the peasants in the provinces, called (after their leader Caillet, nicknamed Jacques Bonhomme) the *Jacquerie,* and accounted one of the most atrocious events in the world's history. Later came the battles between the growing power of the crown and the great vassals who tried to maintain their independence. Under the shrewd, energetic, and perfidious Louis XI the realm became more and more centralized, but this result was won at the cost of the dissolution of the Burgundian domains, in which everything of cultural value and importance belonging to the age was assembled. Here stood the finest, most flourishing cities; here were created the choicest products of industry and craftsmanship; here lived the greatest painters, musicians, and mystics. Indeed, the Burgundian culture may be taken as the most thoroughgoing example of the "incubation period." It was a world of blood and colour, of red passions and a bright will to beauty; a world at once blooming and dim, childlike and perverse, dull and supersplendid — a big, swelled, barbaric fever-dream. The Dutch scholar Huizinga, in an excellent book recently published, has described it as the "autumn of the Middle Ages." To us it seems more of a mysterious prelude to spring, the subterranean awakening of a new life amid snow and hail and all the capricious spasms of expectant, agitated nature.

The only two positive credit-entries which European politics can show during this period are the expulsion of the Arabs from Spain and the destruction of Mongol rule in Russia.

Anti-clericalism

The condition of the Church has already been frequently alluded to. A furious contempt for the clergy is the signature of the age. On every possible occasion we hear denunciation of their coarseness and ignorance, their self-indulgence and licence, their covetousness and idleness. They played, drank, hunted, thought only of their stomach, and ran after every petticoat. In Italy in particular the words "parson" and "*cicisbeo*" are almost synonyms. Innumerable public sayings, clichés, and proverbs reflect the prevailing attitude towards the clerical class. It was universally held that a bishop could not enter heaven. A specially plentiful and luscious feast was called a prelates' dinner. Of celibacy it was said that it differed from wedlock in that the layman had one wife, but the priest ten. "As long as the peasant has wives, the priest has no need to marry"; "'I crucify my flesh,' says the monk as he lays the ham and venison crosswise on his buttered bread." Concubines were a matter of course with most of the clergy; they were known as "soul-cows" because they were the constant entourage of the soul-pastor. Even a theological authority such as Chancellor Gerson declared the oath of chastity to mean simply the renunciation of marriage, and when it was desired to reproach anyone for particularly loose living, the phrase was: "lewd as a Carmelite." It was quite usual for priests to frequent taverns, play for dancing, and tell ribald stories; even in the Vatican reading aloud from pornographic literature was much enjoyed. The Council of Constance drew courtesans, jugglers, and procurers in crowds from all quarters, and Avignon was reputed to have become a city of brothels after the popes took it for their residence. Nay, we could go further and say that part of the clergy was caught in a current of atheism to which the people reacted in their turn.

Wyclif

Yet these were but scattered and separate symptoms, and opposition was as yet inert, lacking in conscious aim and in uniformity. The first massed attack against the Papal Church began with Wyclif, who with scientific orderliness and precision, temperament, sledge-hammer power of argument, and an almost poetical gift of representation, forestalled all the ideas on which the later Reformation was founded, and even, in some points, went far beyond the leaders of that movement. He started from the clear and simple principle that the Church was no longer the Church and the pope no longer the Pope. It was not for the Pope to be the imperious ruler, but the humble servant of Christ; the governance of souls was given him by God to hold as a fief, and if he were a bad vassal, failing to keep his Lord's laws and associating with His deadly enemies, worldly lust and worldly possessions, then it must be escheated. The Papacy was not demonstrably founded in the law of God, the Church had no outward and visible head. Wyclif desired, therefore, no more and no less than a popeless Church. But he made two more important points: laymen were to have the right to read the Bible (which he translated into English for the purpose), and most of the external apparatus of ecclesiastical practice was to go — pilgrimages and the use of relics, confession and extreme unction, celibacy and the hierarchy. And, lastly, he contested even the dogma of transubstantiation. Hussism added nothing to Wyclif's system and on certain points even narrowed it down. It is, indeed, no more than a weaker, emptier duplication of Wyclifism and contains no single original feature; but the figure of Huss himself acquired a terrific impressiveness by reason of his earnestness, strength of character, and unyielding determination to seek the truth, though with all this there was mingled a chaotic strain of bull-obstinacy and narrow-mindedness — characteristic of all Slav thinkers.

Papa triumphans

On the program of the Council of Constance there stood three main points: the *causa unionis*, the *causa reformationis*, and the *causa fidei*. For none of these three problems was anything even approaching a solution obtained. Conciliarism amounted almost to a sort of republican movement within the Church. It aimed at reducing the Papacy to a purely nominal monarchy, a Mikadodom, so to speak, and placing the actual government in the hands of the Council, the parliament of bishops. The final result was, not only the victory of Curialism over all these efforts, but *Papal Absolutism.*

Thus we have the Papacy entirely triumphant, more triumphant than ever. It triumphed over the bishops and the national churches, over the heretics, over the Emperor and the Empire. Only in one quarter did it fail to triumph, but that was the most important and alone decisive — the human heart. That is why it sinks all at once into impotence and senile decay and asphyxia. Outward victories and defeats determine *nothing* in the march of history. The Kaiser-idea was dead, but not *on account of* its defeats; the Pope-idea died *in spite of* its victories and henceforth overlay the world merely as a shadow of a ghostly shadow. The pope ruled without limitations; but no one now took him seriously, men believed him no more. And as belief in him had been all that really mattered, he was now no longer the successor of Peter, the shepherd of the nations, the vicar of Christ; but only the mighty prince of the Church, the senior bishop, a king with a crown, a treasury, and a state, a rich old man like some others.

What help did his tiara give him? — he was no longer the Holy Father. Let everyone do homage to him, recognize him as ruler of this world and, for that matter, as ruler of the other world, it was all useless: for he was not any of these things. Had the popes honestly tried, in so far as their feeble human powers permitted, to become likenesses of — no, not Christ — merely Peter, likenesses of the good old fisherman, so simple, understanding, vacillating, but so divinely inspired in his simplicity, so fervently struggling to understand, and so touching in his vacillation: then would all Europe be Catholic, and Catholic in belief, to this day.

But the popes did not see it that way. They wanted to take an unfair advantage: to rule over souls and at the same time be earthly rulers; to emancipate themselves from the law which ordains that the one kingdom can only be bought by renouncing the other. It was this untruth, this impossibility, this desperate and unrighteous challenge to the moral system of the universe, which proved their ruin.

The simple always wins and this case was a simple one to sum up. Here is a man who holds his court in gold and purple, commands millions, condemns millions, tries to usurp the Kaiser's rights, and all on the authority of a claim to be the earthly representative of one who lived among men despised as a beggar, who neither could nor would command anyone, who accused none and gave to Cæsar what was Cæsar's due — *Caiaphas* posing as the vicar of *Christ!*

In all this, however, there is one point that must not be lost sight of: that apart from Wyclifism, which was practically exterminated after his death by the house of Lancaster, and Hussism, which became bogged in compromise, the whole movement was at first anti-clerical only and not anti-Catholic. This is an important difference. It was not the dogmas and rituals that men attacked, but false uses and degradation of them; the abuses, not the uses. To this extent the controversy was juridical rather than theological.

Dæmons and magicians

While men's faith was being thus shaken and disorientated and humanity had allowed itself to become confused by the servants of the Church without finding the courage to doubt the Church itself, there rose to the surface some strange currents which had always been at work underground, but now, in the general state of helplessness, became a new power in life. Since God no longer spoke through His priests, other announcers of His will were sought, and thus there arose a very thinly masked polytheism in the form of a dæmon-worship which was reckless, often formidable, and occasionally nasty. Everywhere fantastic intermediaries plied between God and man, and the spirits of hell aroused more fear and respect than the saints. The whole atmosphere was filled with little devils, coarse and fine, wise and foolish, harmless and malicious. They were " as numerous as the dust-particles in a shaft of sunlight." They sat at table, in the workshop, on the bed-edge; they rode on goats' backs or appeared in the guise of ravens, rats, and toads. And alongside of them all manner of nature-spirits led a mysterious existence in bush and forest, in wells and lakes, in fire and wind — pale memories of the ancient mythology. All the marvellous creatures which still people our fairy-tales controlled in those days the whole of the grown-up population's doings. There were elves, nixies, fairies, witches, kobolds, and nightmares. Even the Church's saints were transformed into nature-gods, heathen elementals. No longer did Jews, heretics, and the Mohammedans inspire mere hatred and horror, but rather fear and respectful awe; for all the world believed in the desecration of the Host, black masses, and ritual murders. We should, however, be seriously misunderstanding the real source of this superstition if we were to allocate it to crazy religious fanaticism or even intentionally malicious slander. The people regarded these God-defying actions, not as a mere negation, but as a very real devil-worship, a sort of inverted Christianity and looked up to it with the same astonishment as to the figure of Antichrist. Men of those days, as we have pointed out, held the more or less clear conviction that the Devil ruled the world, and it was only logical that they should believe in the secret existence of a Devil's church, a Devil's congregation, and a Devil's ritual.

Side by side with the grosser superstitions, there grew up and spread an abstruse but systematic belief in magic. Spells and prophecies, the interpretation of dreams and the flights of birds, consultation of the hours and the planets, were all part of the routine of daily life. Omens were seen everywhere: in the neighing of horses and howling of wolves, in the direction of the wind, and in the form of the clouds. Curses and blessings had the power to ban or attract; certain signs and gestures were able to bind or loose. To meet a hunchback brought luck; to meet an old woman or — very significantly — a priest brought ill luck. Numerous legends, too, reflect this belief in these ever present and often triumphant powers of evil, chief among them the widespread saga of the wizard Virgil: a Lucifer-like figure that successfully defies God's commands, obtains gold and dominion through the black art, and sees all the knowledge of the world in a magic mirror — the forerunner, in fact, of Faust. And over it all is the vaulting of a dark dome, a world-wide fatalism which finds the supreme wisdom in passive prostration before a destiny long ago written down in the stars.

Money economics with a bad conscience

Then to make the cup of misery full, the murky yellow flood of gold poured into this religionless world. Wealth, especially sudden wealth, is always demoralizing, but here it was a case of a young and quite unprepared humanity with the mediæval view of the sinfulness of taking money still in its blood.

"God has shapen lives three,
Boor and knight and priest they be.
Devil made the fourth and he
Drives the trade of usury,"

says Freidank. But by usury he obviously means every kind of business transaction. Cæsarius of Heisterbach expresses the same view in one clear-cut sentence: "*Mercator sine peccamine vix esse potest.*" The mendicant monks held similar opinions, and when it was pointed out to them that even our Lord made use of money, they replied: "Yes, but He gave the bag to Judas." Another writer, Geiler of Kaisersberg, says: "Trading in money is not work, but fleecing others in idleness." The general point of view was clearly that taking interest and selling — in short, all forms of gain arising from the disposal and not the production of goods — was but a finer and more indirect form of fraud. And this is less paradoxical than it may seem at the first glance to our modern susceptibilities. We hold the same prejudice to a certain extent ourselves, particularly in so-called good society. For there, too, a person would lose caste if it were discovered that he was engaged in lending money at interest (even quite moderate interest) to friends and acquaintances or in selling things to them at a profit (be it never so modest a profit). We see, therefore, that an ethical principle which once ruled all classes is still alive and effective in a circle which is, so to say, an enclave of good manners and conduct. It is not so long ago, we must remember, that in England a man could only call himself a gentleman if he had no mercantile occupation.

Handicraft was not included under trading, for in fact it was not the disposal of the product, but the *work* on it, that was paid for, particularly as in most cases the raw materials were still provided by the clients. You took your own cloth to the tailor, your leather to the shoemaker, your flour to the baker, and your wax to the candle-maker. Even so, already there were large numbers of people who lived by buying and selling, and these found themselves in a curious psychical condition. On the one hand they shared the

the essential traits of the ungifted and the negatively gifted and developing these traits to the utmost degree, one had to regard him as having achieved a creative act. Hurrying on in advance of his time, he experienced and embodied already the whole materialism of urban civilization, and that at a time when the relations of life were still regarded mainly from a romantic angle. It was due neither to a curious accident nor to a shrewd *volte-face* in the policy of the electors that such a man came to the throne after the Hohenstaufens. Under that dynasty the Kaiser-idea had bloomed and wilted and there were then only two possibilities for the German kingdom: it must either abdicate for good, or take its stand on an entirely new basis, with so radical a change of outlook that a negation of what had gone before must perforce result. This is what Rudolf of Habsburg did, and, therefore, he was the right man for the job. It is obvious that only a person with his qualities could tidy up the German empire: a person with a wholly unenthusiastic and unidealist mind, but one which moved with firmness and certainty, concentrated exclusively on the obvious and proximate. Rudolf of Habsburg is the first great Philistine of modern history, the first man with the middle-class point of view to wear the royal purple. In him were personified the business man, the modern politician, the dynastic profiteer at the rudder of state, the man of no prejudices: that is, of no conscience and no imagination.

A peculiar, almost uncanny lack of brilliance surrounded his figure and his reign. The man was like his clothes: grey, colourless, shabby, insignificant, destitute of figure-head quality. His much-vaunted " homeliness " had its roots partly in shrewd calculation — a bid for school-book appeal — partly in small-mindedness and avarice, and partly in a complete lack of temperament. The Muses contributed nothing to his make-up, he was without understanding of or even interest in the arts. He was niggardly towards the poets at his court, encouraging them only in so far as he scented good publicity value in them. With everyone, indeed, his dealings were regulated by the personal profit he could extract from them, and he was as quick at foreseeing that profit as he was vigorous in holding it. He was, in fact, the prototype of the supple and tough, fish-blooded and masterful, experienced and unscrupulous self-made man. His Catholicism rested purely on policy and neither on piety nor on conviction, let alone bigotry; for in this narrow heart there was not even room for fanaticism. Like all business men he was scrupulously careful of the outward reputation of his firm, but naturally this did not prevent him from proceeding to the worst misdeeds and brutalities wherever these could be hushed up or extenuated, or from begging and extorting on every convenient occasion. Johannes Scherr says of him, very pertinently, that in our day he would probably have played with the stock exchange like Louis Philippe. He resembles the modern financier, too, in his typical stock-exchange sexuality, that vivid grossness of voluptuousness which is frequently found in big financial men. The number of his legitimate children alone was very large, and at sixty-six he married yet again, this time a girl of fourteen. But even that was apparently not enough, for "by advice of the doctors" he kept several mistresses besides.

History has nevertheless instinctively done right in regarding him, in spite of, or rather because of, these dubious traits, as the inaugurator of a new age and more particularly as the founder of Austria as a world-power. For he did actually create the scheme by which Austria became great and could alone have become great. He is the originator of the "*Tu, felix Austria, nube*" policy and the inventor of those tactics of temporizing, tacking, delays, and half-promises which for six centuries proved so successful for the Habsburgers. Even so early, his clear eye traced the outline of the future Austro-Hungarian state in which Bohemia, Hungary, and southern Slavonia were grouped about the firm nucleus of the original German countries. He was the triumphant embodiment of a spiritual condition, the usefulness and uselessness of which the world at large realized only at a much later date. Kürnberger was the first to give this attitude a name; he says: "The duty of the Austrian house, Court, and State was not to be, but to appear to be."

The nihilist on the throne

A figure of quite a different cast is that of Frederick II, one of the most gifted men who ever wore a crown. In his humane many-sidedness and far-seeing state policy he reminds us of Julius Cæsar; in his freedom and intellectuality, of Frederick the Great; and in his vigour, his spirit of enterprise, and his, shall we say, artist's *gaminerie*, of Alexander the Great. But all these qualities have with him a pronounced tinge of nihilism. His universal comprehension of everything human was rooted less in the knowledge that all living things have an equal justification than in the conviction that no one is right. His liberty of thought was a form of atheism; his fine and superior intellectuality a scepticism; his temperament and his vigour a sort of creative loosening of all political and religious bonds. He was only a destroyer, though on a grandiose and dæmonic scale.

But if Rudolf of Habsburg felt himself to be, so to say, morally exterritorial because, in his extreme materialism, ethical points of view did not even occur to him, Frederick arrived at a quite similar mental attitude by seeing these points of view as far beneath his notice. He was practically a "free mind" in the Nietzschean sense. Endowed with a superb lack of principle and a Classical insolence of the type embodied in Alcibiades and Lysander, he was, like most "free minds," superstitious and addicted to astrology and necromancy. He weighed all the affairs of life with the cool eye of a fatalist who moves like a chessman at the bidding of a blind and often absurd necessity. But this side of his nature was in no wise inconsistent with an eminently scientific brain. He encouraged study and research of an order which in contemporary opinion was either valueless or impious, founded universities, libraries, and the first zoölogical garden, possessed a truly passionate interest in natural science, himself wrote an excellent ornithological treatise, and tried to draw into the sphere of influence of his court all who were progressive, intellectually inspiring, and philosophically minded. In poets, indeed — though he was himself among the first to write Italian verse — he never saw anything but political tools; as tools, however, he used them in an incomparably broader and more intelligent way than ever Rudolf did. Withal, he had a firm conviction of his divine right of kingship, though to the great bewilderment of the mediæval he called it a natural necessity. As is well known, he preferred Saracens to Christians. These cool and polished men of the world, with their refinements of diplomacy and love-making, their tolerant and already somewhat senile philosophy, their highly developed algebra, medicine, astronomy, and chemistry, were of necessity more akin to his own nature. His conduct in Palestine is unique in the history of the Crusades. Excommunicated by the Pope, and unsupported and even attacked by the crusading Orders, he yet achieved more positive results than his predecessors, simply by amicable negotiations with the Arabian Government. It soon became obvious that the Sultan was just as well-educated, well-behaved, and discerning a cavalier as the Emperor, and a solution of the Palestine problem agreeable to both was speedily reached. But sensible, natural dealings have never had any great charm for mankind, and Frederick's contemporaries did not thank him for his bloodless victories in the Holy Land.

The three deceivers

Everyone has heard of the saying attributed to him, that the three greatest deceivers who ever lived were Moses, Christ, and Mohammed, and it has ever been alleged that a treatise, *De tribus impostoribus,* was written by him. (The latter is certainly untrue, and even the saying has never been proved.) Another time he is said to have exclaimed, on seeing a cornfield: "How many gods will be seen arising out of this corn!" On being asked by a Saracen prince at mass what the monstrance stood for, he is supposed to have replied: "The priests pretend that it is our God." These words, again, are probably legendary. And yet there is a hidden truth in such anecdotes which survive stubbornly through the centuries; "*E pur si muove*" is not historical, neither did Luther ever say: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." What these legends do prove is that these men *might* have said these words, that indeed they *ought* to have said them. They serve the purpose of making the actual situation more consistent and impressive and are in a sense truer than the truths of history. The same applies to that remark about the three impostors. The Emperor's meaning was probably this: "I see the descendants of Moses ceaselessly sinning against the Ten Commandments; I see the disciples of Mohammed living contrary to the Koran; I see the followers of Christ hating and murdering in His name: and if that is so, then are all three religions — Judaism, Islam, and Christianity — one great imposture." On the other hand, it is quite unlikely that he intended by this any attack on the persons of the the three founders; to do that he would have had to be either a fanatical religious desperado or an enlightened imbecile of the modern sort. He was neither; indeed, the thing that most astonishes and baffles us about him is precisely his complete and thoroughgoing religious indifference. He neither hated nor attacked any of the three monotheistic confessions — all three left him equally indifferent. Even the conviction that a creed is worthy of being cursed is tantamount to a sort of creed in itself, but Frederick believed in nothing. "*Tout comprendre c'est tout mépriser,*" as Nietzsche said — with a difference — and it was this *mépris* for positively everything which was the devastating root-emotion of Frederick's soul.

It is easy to see why this unfathomable personality roused as much horror as admiration in its time. Some called Frederick the Wonder of the World, *stupor mundi;* others saw in him the Antichrist. Gregory IX began an encyclical with the words: "Out of the sea there came forth a beast covered with names of offence, with the feet of a bear, the throat of a roaring lion, and in all other parts like to a panther. Examine well the head, body, and tail of this beast, which calls itself emperor." But the people made him a national saint, an imperishable saga-figure. It was said that he did not die, but would come again one day and overthrow the Papal throne, erect a kingdom of glittering splendour, and be a saviour to all the oppressed and heavy-laden. From time to time spurious Fredericks continued to appear, the last occasion being in 1546. Then again it was told that he was asleep in the Kyffhäuser cavern and it was not until the prosaic nineteenth century that this legend was transferred to his far less important grandfather Frederick I, whose red beard has been growing round the marble lake ever since, for the delight of all headmasters.

Coincidentia oppositorum

But in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Europe was simply peopled with little Rudolfs and Fredericks. Now, materialism and nihilism spring from much the same state of mind. Both of them deny the workings of higher powers of our existence: nihilism because it *no longer* believes in them; materialism because it does *not yet* believe in them. The one and the other are morbid phenomena, pathological aspects of life: nihilism because it stands *too far* from reality, seeing it in too distant a perspective, so that everything is blurred in shadowy mist and fog; materialism because it stands away *too little* from reality, seeing it in too close perspective, so that large and essential features become unrecognizable. Nihilism suffers from dilatation of the heart when it recognizes an equality of everything, which is as good as saying nothing; while materialism fails from constriction of the heart, taking account of nothing but things directly tangible and accessible to the coarsest senses — that is, the worthless and unimportant things. Both standpoints represent an un-serious view of existence; both are without foundation or root. The Philistine is just as much in the air as the free-thinker.

And it is this which constitutes the secret inward bond between these two tendencies. In their effect and outward appearance they are poles apart, two completely opposed outlooks on life; for of all the possible formulations of reality, these are the two which differ most. We ask, therefore, how it was that two such flat opposites could exist in the same age, and even in the same person; and, in asking, find the answer to lie in the *idea of the age,* the idea that filled and dominated this whole incubation period; and now we are in a far better position to discuss it, since for the fixation of representative personalities in that age we must have recourse to artificial expedients and makeshift constructions. The basic idea of the age was, in short, this: that life consisted in the union of two apparently quite irreconcilable opposites, and human beings were nothing but the meeting-point of two opposing influences.

Nicolaus Cusanus

This basic idea was formulated with illuminating distinctness by the greatest, perhaps the only, philosopher of the age. Nicolaus, called Cusanus from his birthplace at Cues near Trier (d. 1464), was the son of a poor Moselle fisherman, became one of the most versatile scholars of his age, and rose to be an influential prince of the Church. He played a decisive part in the theological controversies of his century, championing the modern or Conciliar view, which he put before the Council of Basel in his great work: *De concordantia catholica.* (His principal opponent was John of Torquemada, who, in his treatise *Summa de ecclesia et eius auctoritate* laid down the lines that Papal doctrine followed for centuries afterwards.) Nicolaus Cusanus was also the first to dispute the genuineness of the Donation of Constantine, which was subsequently exposed as a forgery by Laurentius Valla. Amongst his works is a conversation on religion in which he argued in favour of the union of all confessions: Christian, Jewish, Turkish, Indian, and Persian. In his *De reparatione calendarii* he drew up a scheme of calendar reform which anticipated the Gregorian, and he taught that the earth was round and turned on its own axis. In his philosophy he was, as a former pupil of the Deventer fraternity, to some extent a mystic; but as his teaching system also found room for certain trains of thought taken from Scholasticism and natural philosophy, he was claimed by a variety of different schools as their own product. In other words, he was a comprehensive spirit of the stamp of Leibniz and Hegel, and he assimilated the entire cultural content of his time into an organic unity within himself.

It was on his return in 1438 from Constantinople, where he had been as Papal ambassador, that the basic principle of his philosophy dawned on him — the *coincidentia oppositorum:* that is, everything that is, lives and takes effect by reason of being the point of intersection of two opposite forces. One such *coincidentia oppositorum* is God, who represents the absolute maximum (for He is all-embracing infinity) and the absolute minimum (for He is contained in everything, even the smallest). Another *coincidentia oppositorum* is the World, which as regards the individual existences in it forms an immeasurable plurality, but as a whole forms a unity. Every *individual* also is a coincidence of opposites, for not only is it contained in the All, but the All is contained in it: *in omnibus partibus relucet totum.* Another is the *human being,* who as a microcosm, a "*parvus mundus,*" combines within himself all imaginable contrasts — and knows that he does so — mortality and immortality, body and soul, bestiality and divinity. Another is, finally, Cusanus himself, in that he reconciled religion with natural science and the patristic with the mystic: in that he was a careful guardian of the old and a fiery herald of the new, a man of the world and a seeker after God, a heretic and a cardinal, the last of the Schoolmen and the first of the Moderns.

But how this all-round concordance of the apparently hostile, this agreement of the opponents, is reached remains a divine mystery which we cannot fathom by reason, but only by transcendental vision: by an inner process, that is, which Cusanus — again, as usual, coupling two contrasting factors — describes as *docta ignorantia, comprehensio incomprehensibilis.* The phenomena of magnetism and electricity were not yet known to him, otherwise he would have been able to extract from them the most important and speaking proofs for his doctrine of polarity. Taking all in all, what he introduced into philosophy is really the principle of *creative paradox,* which he traced out and exemplified in every domain of inward and outward experience and incorporated in the most telling fashion in his own life and work.

Dual truth, double-entry bookkeeping, counterpoint, and Dance of Death

It was remarked at the close of the last chapter that mediæval man makes a contradictory impression upon us. But the contradictions that there concerned us and those of the men of the incubation period differ essentially. For at first these contrasts all arose out of one great unity, faith, and had besides an objective existence for the observer only — the people themselves were not aware of them. Now it is different: the contemporaries of Cusanus were well aware of their contradictions and suffered under them. Through all the phenomena that the age produced there runs a break, a split, a great seam, the feeling of a world-ruling dualism — the *man of two souls* makes his entry into history.

We have already said that it was not until this era that the dualism between town and country comes sharply to the surface. From now on we have two contrasted cultures, a knightly and a mercantile one. The first is concentrated in the *Burg,* the second in the *Bürger.* And it is about the same time that the doctrine of twofold truth appears in theology, the theory that one and the same proposition may be right in theology and wrong in philosophy. The Middle Ages had held grimly to their great unity: " I believe what I know, I know what I believe "; but now for the first time there was opened that chasm between the scientific and religious attitudes which yawns through the whole course of modern history. " Yawns," I may well say, for it is an uncomfortable and often extremely wearisome proceeding to follow the strainings of the priests, politicians, artists, philosophers, and scientists who deal with this question, and whose deductions are mostly sophistical, now artificially and superficially reconciling the two experienced forms of faith and knowledge, and now driving them into opposite extremes. But at the same time the view that that " twofold truth " is mere Jesuitry is just one of the many shallow misjudgments of Liberal history-writing; what we should see in it rather is a new determinant of the general outlook. Here too, as the Occamist doctrine of discrepancy shows us, we are dealing with one more of the many formulations of the *coincidentia oppositorum* idea. Regarded in the light of this idea, every basic theological problem — the Fall and the Day of Judgment, the Incarnation and Virgin Birth, the Last Supper and the Resurrection — should have two conflicting views, and the supreme truth could only be attained by uniting them. It was in this same period, too, that dualistic technique took charge in a very different sphere from that of theology — namely, commercial arithmetic. Under the newly-invented system of double-entry bookkeeping, *partita doppia, loi digraphique,* the usage of entering every item on two opposite pages made every account a *coincidentia oppositorum.* But the most striking experience of the new world-outlook is found in music, where the mediæval principle of monody gave way to polyphony, and Counterpoint reached its complete development. The earliest classic of the new style was John Dunstaple, who died in London in 1453. We also find a manifest symbol of the coincidence of opposites in the " Dances of Death," the *danses macabres,* which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provided the subject of innumerable graphic and dramatic productions. Here Death plays the fiddle while youths and greybeards, women and children, peasants and bishops, kings and beggars, fools and saints, and every imaginable type of humanity dance madly round and round. A more impressive picture of the way in which the men of those days looked upon life could hardly be drawn. Death and dancing became brother and sister, and the most drunken affirmation of life was at the same time a staggering towards the grave. It is thus that the whole age passes before our eyes — a crazy dance of those marked down by death. Its much-vaunted joy of life was the euphoria of the madman.

The oversoul

Our picture would still be incomplete without the mention of a third tendency, not the most important, but undoubtedly the most impressive of the whole era. Materialism and nihilism may stand for the two antagonistic forces in the double soul of these centuries, but here it is a question of something more like an oversoul, which hovered calmly and mysteriously in blissful secrecy over the age. This something was *mysticism.*

To all appearances the Devil ruled the world in those days; men believed it to be so, and we ourselves can hardly escape the same feeling. But it was not so: the truth is that he never has ruled and never does rule the world. God was not dead then any more than now, He lived as powerfully as at any time in the souls of straying, seeking mankind. A whole new wild and fervent piety burst from the depths of the human soul just at that time. Plain men of the people had all sorts of portentous visions. A Strassburg merchant, Rulman Merswin, reverted to the original doctrine of the universal priesthood of all Christian believers and declared the divinely favoured layman, the "Friend of God," to be the chosen imparter of heavenly grace. Taking this as their collective title, all those who took their Christianity seriously formed a union with no other bond than the purity of their mode of thought and the intensity of their yearning for salvation. One element above all now asserted itself in the religious movement — women, who up till then had remained almost entirely in the background and, only a short time before, had been declared by eminent religious teachers to be without souls. These women, awakened to religion, began to record their visions and trances and their mysterious experiences in contact with God, in letters, diaries, and memoirs; and in this way there grew up a wholly distinctive literature of ecstatic confession and self-revelation. Before long they too assembled in convents of their own and became known as Béguines or "praying sisters." Later on they were joined by the male Beghards, and great mystic collective experiences followed. Here we are in the presence of a weighty fact of cultural history we shall frequently meet again: the fact that great spiritual movements and emotional revivals very often originate among women. A woman possesses a natural flair for everything that may germinate, every kind of secret growth, everything, in fact, which is of the future rather than the present. This almost telepathic sense is usually more developed in her than in a man. She is also far less conservative and less one-sided than a man, who forms in himself a self-contained and definitely outlined unity. He is the born professional and expert, but a woman is a multiplicity of things; her soul is open to all possibilities, she has that gift of being everything, transforming herself into everything, which in men is the attribute of genius only; hence it has often, and rightly, been asserted that there is something feminine in every man of genius.

All the religious phenomena of that age arose out of one basic common will, the will to find the way back to God — not to the Church's God, hidden under a thousand outward ceremonies and obscured by a maze of intricate syllogisms, but to the deep, pure, serene source itself from which all life flows. Within the Church the main supporters of this movement were the monastic orders, above all the Dominicans and Franciscans. As has ever been the way, they began their reform of the Christian life and faith with a return to the early Christian doctrines and customs. The Dominicans took the more moderate view that men must restrict themselves to "necessary" things in following Christ; but the Franciscans went all the way, teaching that no one could be saved who did not abjure the world and seek to become an image of the Apostles in his way of life, and this rule, they insisted, applied above all to the earthly successors of Peter, the popes. Small wonder that Pope John XXII declared their teaching to be heretical. In the matter of preaching, on the contrary, it was the Franciscans who aimed at keeping in close touch with the world. They wanted to work on the people and therefore relied on plastic vividness and force, rejecting neither coarse realism nor harsh satire as means to their end. The Dominicans, on the other hand, became the classics of mystic philosophy. Their brightest light was Meister Eckhart, one of the most profound and universal intellects that Germany has ever produced.

The new religion

Eckhart is a curious cross between the crystal-clear thinker, the poet of incomparable power and plastic and original language, and the religious genius. His teachings, banned by the Curia after his death, constitute a *Summa* of all mystical speculation. Naturally, he was an agnostic — he says of truth that were it comprehensible, it could not be truth. The godhead is enthroned in impenetrable darkness, motionless, calm. We can only make negative assertions about it, as, for instance, that it is infinite, unfathomable, uncreated; every positive predicate turns God into an idol. God is not this or that. Anyone who imagines he has known God or has formed for himself any figure whatever of God, may indeed have known "something or other," but not God. "Thou shouldst know Him without the help of any picturing, mediation, or analogy." "If I ought to recognize God without mediation, then surely I must actually become He, and He I!" "But that is just what I mean! God must actually become I and I actually become God." "The smallest creative picture formed within thee is as big as God. Why? It takes from thee a whole God. For in the moment when this picture enters into thee, God, with all His godliness, must make way for it. But when this picture goes out, God comes in. And is it going to do thee any harm, friend, that you allow God to be God within thee?" "Never has man so longed for anything as God has longed to persuade man to be one with

God. God is ready at all times, but we are very unready; God is near to us, but we are far from him; God is inside, we are outside; God is at home with us, we are strangers with Him." To achieve pure contemplation of God, even union with him, to become "godded," all that is needed is *to be still*. Man must be silent that God may speak, man must suffer that God may take effect. All creatures are a sheer nothing: there is only God and not, as our unreason believes, God *and* the creature. Therefore we must strip off our creatureness. This we can do by "seclusion" — that is, by liberation from all sensuality — and by poverty. A poor man is he who knows nothing, wants nothing, and owns nothing. As long as man craves for any particular thing, he is not yet really poor — that is, not yet really perfect. Therefore, our prayers, too, must be concerned with God only, not ourselves — he who prays for something prays for a nothing. The truly pious can also well dispense with the Church's grace, for to him every dish is a sacrament. It is not confession, going to mass, or the like that matters, but the birth of Christ within us. Even Mary's holiness consists not in that she bore Jesus physically, but because she bore Him spiritually, and therein every human being can imitate her at any time. Virtue does not consist in a doing, but in a being. Works should not sanctify us, but we them. But only those works will be holy which are done on their own account. "I maintain definitely: as long as thou executest thy works for the sake of heaven, of God, or of thine own salvation, thou art certainly not on the right way. It will be possible to tolerate thee, but it is not the best thou canst do." Man can attain to any heights if only he has the will, for the will is all-powerful: "No one can hinder thee except thyself."

These scanty quotations will no doubt suffice to show that what Eckhart and his school achieved was nothing less than the birth of a new religion, a complete transcreation of the previous Christian faith, in comparison with which the Lutheran Reformation stands as an earthquake to a geological recasting, or as a purifying and fertilizing storm to a world-change of climate that calls a new flora and fauna into existence. Had this movement succeeded, a new world-age would have dawned for Europe; but it was suppressed by the Church, and with a measure of success which is less a reproach to the Church's quite logical protection of its own interests than to the obvious unripeness of European humanity for a rebuilding of shaken foundations.

The school of Eckhart

Mysticism contains two basic elements: an ecstatic and a practical. These elements appeared in unbalanced but immensely expressive forms in Johannes Tauler of Strassburg and Heinrich Suso of Constance respectively. Tauler, who acquired the cognomen *Doctor sublimis,* is not the equal of his master in depth and acuteness of speculation, but it was not in these things that, for him, the centre of gravity lay. What he preached, endlessly and with rare force and spirituality, as the one thing needful was the unconditional following of Christ. "Let no one suppose that he must necessarily fly up to the heights of the Godhead. Let it be that he has been a righteous, perfect, and practised man, leading an effective life and bravely following the life of Christ. So let a man set before him the mirror that is without a flaw, the perfect picture — namely, Jesus Christ, according to whom all his life shall be arranged, inwardly and outwardly. . . . All things must become as bitter as the former pleasure in their existence was sweet." Suso, on the other hand, was so luxuriant a preacher of the new wisdom that he was called God's Minnesinger. In the centre of his lyrical rhapsodies stood the mystic idea that the soul was the bride of God, thirsting fervently after Him. "Who will give me," he cried, "the heavens' width for a parchment, the ocean's depth for ink, the leaves and the grass for pens, that I may write out my heart's passion in full?" For eight years he wore a cross studded with nails on his naked back "in praise of his crucified Lord."

Another influence was Johann Ruysbroeck, founder of the abbey of Groenendael, who was regarded by all his fellows as a marvel of divine illumination. He recorded his inspired ideas in a number of works characterized by a peculiar heavy kind of beauty and a simple profundity. When the Veronese saw Dante in the street, they used to say to their children with a shudder: "*Eccovi l'uom ch'è stato all' Inferno* (There is the man who has been in Hell)." Just so the contemporaries of Ruysbroeck must have felt the profound thrill of knowing one who had been in Heaven. He combined the serenity of a child to whom everything is still clear with the far-sightedness of an old man who can send glances into the beyond. His works are picture-books which are able to portray the most hidden things. The Church bestowed on him the title *Doctor ecstaticus;* his countrymen called him *l'admirable,* and when he died, in 1381, at the age of a hundred and seven, all the bells in the neighbourhood began to toll of themselves. One of his disciples was Gerhardt Groot, who founded the lay order of the "Brethren of the Communal life" at Deventer, a free union of believers whose sole aim it was to encourage a Christian way of life and the *moderna devotio,* the new devotion to God as taught by the mystics. Soon there sprang up similar brotherhoods in all parts of Germany and the Netherlands, and it was from their ranks that Thomas à Kempis came, whose *Imitation of Christ* is, after the Bible, the most widespread book on earth, is read eagerly by Catholics and Protestants alike, and has been translated into all European and numerous non-European languages. It popularizes the doctrines of the great mystics in a very noble, free, and powerful manner, and in it the Quietist element comes out with all impressiveness and clarity. "So far as thou mayest, hold thyself aloof from the confusions of men. Why do we so gladly chatter with others, since it is but rarely that we can return to silence without injured conscience. I would that I had oft been silent and oft not among men." Too much hair-splitting and argument does no good. "Rather would I find repentance and atonement within myself than be able to argue as to the nature of repentance. For all is mere nothingness and vanity, save loving God and serving Him alone." "He is truly great who is small unto himself and counts great honours as nothing. He is truly wise who regards all temporal things as mud, so he may gain Christ. And he is truly learned who loses his own will and learns to do and fulfil the will of God."

The "Frankforter"

But the finest monument to the spirit of the age is found in the anonymous *Little Book of the Perfect Life* (*Büchlein vom vollkommenen Leben*). Luther, who republished it, says in his preface: "Above all, this little book warns those who wish to read and understand it that they should not judge it over-hastily, because some of the wording may appear wrong and out of the accustomed manner of preachers and teachers. And, verily, it does not float on the surface like foam on the waves, but is called from the bed of the Jordan by a true Israelite, whose name God knows." And again, two years later: "And, to commend my good old gossip once more, never have I met with a book, apart from the Bible and St. Augustine, from which I have learnt more and still intend to learn of the meaning of God, Christ, and all things that be. Please God this little book may become better known, and then we shall realize that German theologians are undoubtedly the best theologians." This short work, covering little more than five sheets, is in fact one that everyone should read, high or low, wise or simple, learned or ignorant, for it appeals to all. It should be not only universally read, but carefully studied, inwardly experienced, and preferably learnt word for word by heart; for it is of all documents one of the most illuminating on human heights and depths, grandeur and humility. This being so, it is a task of quite peculiar difficulty to attempt to reproduce the basic ideas of the work in a few words.

Man ought to become perfect. But what is perfection and what is makeshift? The perfect is the one entity which embraces and holds in its being all entities; whereas the makeshift or imperfection is that which has issued from this perfection or *is becoming*, as a glow issues from the sun or from a candle, and appears as something, as this or that. And that is called a *creature*. Sin means only that the creature has turned aside from this perfection, this unchangeable good, and turned to the particular, the changeable and imperfect and, above all, to itself. Therefore, if the creature assumes into itself any God as being its own, this constitutes a falling away. "What else did the Devil do, in what else did his falling away or his downfall consist, but in assuming that he too was something and wished to be something, and that something was his own and his due? And what else did Adam do but just this? They say that it was because he ate the apple that he was lost or 'fell'; but I say that it was on account of this assumption of his: this 'I' and 'me' and 'mine' and the like. Had he eaten seven apples, he would not have fallen, but for his assumption." The soul of man has two eyes. One is the gift of looking into eternity, the other that of looking into time and into created beings, and of distinguishing among them. And one single glance into eternity is more pleasing to God than anything that His creatures may achieve merely as creatures. He who achieves that glance will inquire no further: he has found the kingdom of God and everlasting life while still on earth. He has the *inward* peace of which Christ spoke, which prevails over all opposition and perversity, against oppression, poverty, and shame. He has the quiet which enables him to be joyful in the manner of the Apostles, and indeed of all chosen friends of God and followers of Christ. The "old man," as we know, stands for Adam, for disobedience, egoism, somethingness, and other such things. He who lives in his egoism and according to the "old man," is called, and is, a child of Adam. Let him live in it long enough and essentially enough, and he becomes a child and brother of the Devil. "All of this may be summed up in this short sentence: See that you be thoroughly detached from yourself." The same applies to following after Christ. He who leads a Christian life with the object of achieving or earning anything will do so as if for hire and not for love; which is to say, he does not really lead the life. God would rather have a single genuine worker for love than a thousand hirelings. As long as men seek what is "best" for them, they will not find it. For then they only seek themselves and imagine that they themselves are the best. But as they are not the best, they are not seeking the best while they seek themselves. To those who have tasted perfection, all *created* things are of no account, themselves included. And so, for the first time, a genuine inner life arises. Then, as they make steady progress, they find God becoming man, until finally there is nothing that is not God or of God. "That we may escape from ourselves and die as to our own self-will, living only for God and His will, to this may He help us who gave up His will to His heavenly Father, Jesus Christ." "Here endeth the Frankforter."

The author, "whose name God knows," was in fact a member of the Teutonic Order of knighthood, and in his last years custodian of the German Herrenhaus at Frankfurt-am-Main. The book was written about a generation after the death of Eckhart and just about as long before that of Ruysbroeck. It was placed on the Index like all the other mystical writings; but the spirit which inspired it has appeared again and again for mankind, notwithstanding a hundred excommunications. When Luther in later life became a prince of the Church himself and reverted to many an ancient dogma and ceremony, the book found other adorers. It was resuscitated by Sebastian Franck, the greatest Protestant mystic of the Lutheran age, a heretic within heresy, so to say; it was cherished in circles of the Pietists; it became a favourite book with Schopenhauer, who placed "the Frankforter," as he called him, beside Buddha and Plato. And it will still make many an appearance, waking up hearts and heads, for it is a book which, like the Bible, was really and truly written by God.

Mysticism of the painters

Now, there is a very remarkable relationship between this mystical speculation and the painting of the period. We shall frequently notice, and at a later stage examine more closely, the fact that the arts of form, and, above all, painting, are nearly always first in the field with the expression of new symptoms that are dawning in the soul of the age. Painting is at any moment — not always, but nearly always — the most modern of artistic forms of expression. The present case is an instance of this. The lonely individual thinkers visualized linkages which were far in advance of contemporary humanity's power of comprehension, and the pictures of the great German and Flemish masters are painted mysticism. Of course, the materialism and diabolism of the age made a strong impression on painting. In portraits, every tiny wrinkle in the face, every tiny hair in the fur, every thread of the coat, is registered with minute and often pedantic literalness. It not infrequently happens that we are strangely moved and alarmed by the positively gallows-bird physiognomies, full of fiendish perversion and devilish perfidy, and the coarse gestures, full of brutality and covetousness, which meet our eye, not merely in pictures where the subject would call for them (as in scenes of peasant life or martyrdom), but in some entirely unsuspected context. For instance, in the "Adoration of the Child" by Hugo van der Goes, the praying shepherds give the impression of convicts taken to Sunday service. Hans Multscher of Ulm was a masterly portrayer of exciting, vivid scenes of grotesque infamy and brutality. In his panels of the Passion he managed to get together whole ant-heaps of callous ruffians and tricky footpads. The engravings of the anonymous "Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet," again, are a complete zoölogy of monstrous Calibans. There is no trace of humanity left in his brawling peasants, sneaking pimps, ragged vagabonds, and gaping libertines, with their stupid bird-faces and vile and degraded pig or tapir snouts. Even in serious and dignified subjects the figures are often strikingly ugly. Jan van Eyck's Eve in the Ghent "Adoration of the Lamb" is anything but idealized; with her sloping shoulders and feeble extremities, her hanging bosom and prominent abdomen, she is the worthy ancestress of the then existing race of man. But it is not the realistic creations that are either the great or the representative works of the age. The real high-lights are those works in which the world of Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, and Suso turn into colour. As new media of expression are always found when the will to express is strong enough, so it was just at this point that the brothers van Eyck discovered oil-paints, which did not dry as quickly as tempera colours and so made possible, and thereby opened to the brush, new refinements in mixing, grading, and the distribution of light and shade. The result was a hitherto unattained brilliancy of colouring: rich embroidered brocades, shimmering silks, jewels, gold tissue, armour, and precious woods combined to produce an effect of dazzling and fabulous splendour. The greatest of these psychologists were: in Flanders, the elder van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden; in Germany, Stefan Lochner and Hans Memling. The composition of the painting is often strangely reminiscent of theatre scenery: trees, hills, and houses are seen plane-wise like the "wings" of the stage, and the vista is like a back-cloth let down. Everything has the look of having been taken from a toy-box: we are not only in a theatre, but in a toy theatre. This impression is particularly strong, for instance, in Memling's so-called "Seven Sorrows of Mary." There we have a whole town, most skilfully built up with walls, gates, towers, flights of steps, alleys, and cloisters; but it all strikes us as a set of cardboards for models or a child's box of bricks. And the personages seated in these picture-book surroundings have also something primitive and theatrical about them, with their wooden though dramatic gestures, their chess-board positions, their stiff, awkward, doll-like carriage, and their gorgeous, ample robes — which indeed seem to us to be the principal thing about them, for these big self-supported folds strike us as something quite apart from, something more alive, richer, and more emotive than the bodies that they clothe.

But there is a secondary effect more mysterious than this. Occasionally (in early spring, about midday in summer, after prolonged watching or fasting, or even, maybe, without any visible cause) people and things and we ourselves appear to us *intangible,* as if surrounded by an inexplicable isolating aura. Nothing can get through to us; everything, even our own body, seems to have forfeited its own oppressive reality, its claim to acceptance by the senses, and to have become weightless and immaterial. It is into this spiritual climate that we are transplanted by the pictures of the Flemish and Cologne schools. These lean, serious men, these austere and delicate women, with their slim, sad hands and their frightened up-all-night faces, all live in an imaginary world: faraway creatures, wrapped in their pensive melancholy and yet supported by a blessed eternal assurance. They grip us, these figures compounded of deep confidence in an all-pervading divine presence and constant fear before the deceptive hostile uncertainty of all earthly things. They are paralysed in the fearful presence of a life which persistently torments every creature; they look out into existence with questioning, faltering, incredibly astonished eyes and cannot see where they stand for the inarticulate and indefinite terror that is in them. " So that is the world? " they ask. In their childlike helplessness and angelic lucidity they are citizens of a loftier realm of dreams, which strikes us as distant and strange and yet, again, as like our own home. The world — the world of things and deeds — is not completely put away or deliberately ignored; it is there, but simply outside. It shines in through the high windows in ravishing landscape forms, in mountains, cities, and castles, rivers, mills, and ships, but always as if seen through a telescope — not belonging, as it were. It flutters round the soul only like an unreal vision or a shadowy memory; but the soul, untrammelled by space, rests in God, though still on earth. Time seems to stand still, too. Past and future are one with the present; in God's eyes, they are not moving at all. " And behold," says Meister Eckhart, " everything is one Now! "

A parallel

Taking all in all, we discover a striking resemblance to our own age. No one will seriously dispute the statement that we live in a period of epidemic psychoses; and differences of opinion concern only the significance of these phenomena. Already the close of an age has its *fin de siècle* man, with his typical disequilibrium due to an excess of soul. The Plague corresponds to the World War; and if anyone still doubts that the first was a product of the age, no one will be found to deny it in the case of the second. (We can naturally ignore the " war-guilt question " here; it is merely a question for elementary schoolchildren, since no war could arise between two groups of powers of equal strength unless both sides desired it.) Then, again, we have today the great dissolution of the former dominating powers which characterized the decline of the Middle Ages. The ideal which inspired the political life of the last generation was Constitutionalism. It is now as completely outlived as is the Kaiser-idea; neither the Right nor the Left takes it seriously. The progressive idea on the one hand is the dictatorship of the proletariat and that on the other is the dictatorship of an individual or Cæsarism. What the Church was to the Middle Ages, *official science,* the organization of the learned, has been to the last few centuries. The whole mediæval culture was clerical; all the great creative things were the work of the clerics. They held in their hands not only art, science, and philosophy, but the superior crafts, national agriculture and industry. They constructed not only cathedrals and theological systems, but streets and bridges too. They not only brought education and moral to the people, but turned the woodlands into arable land, and drained the swamps. Wherever life showed progress, there we find them at work, whether it was a matter of book illumination and aristocratic dialectics, or of stable fodder and three-field cultivation. The same dominating intellectual position has been held by the guild of scientists during the last few generations. It has claimed — just as in its day the Church had claimed — to be in full and sole possession of the truth and therefore entitled to dictate dogmatically to all and sundry in every rank and walk of life: to the artist, the research-scholar, the soldier, the business man, the workman. It has been in the fullest sense of the word our religion: that in which we really believe. It has possessed and still possesses a well-organized and carefully graded hierarchy of high and low dignitaries, lacking only the pope. It persecutes with parsonic implacability and short-sightedness every description of heresy, and watches jealously to see that no one dispenses its grace who has not taken its holy orders: the examinations. But the power of the Church had rested upon two conditions: that it was really in possession of the spiritual hegemony, and that its servants were filled with genuine idealistic strivings. At about the turn of the Middle Ages these two foundations began to disappear: culture fell more and more into the hands of the laity, and the majority of the clergy performed their duties in a mechanical and banausic manner. On top of this came the dawning of a new world-picture which was in entire opposition to the Church's teaching. Today the learned professions find themselves in precisely the same situation. People have lost faith in them, except in the lower social strata and among the intellectually reactionary. Their claim to be a world-wide catholic teaching body, a *universitas,* is no longer tenable. They do not now lead in any cultural sphere. They give birth to no infallible Apostolic Fathers, great confessors, or bold martyrs, but only to mass-produced officials, lip-servers, and incumbents in whom there lives, not the Holy Ghost, but the profane desire for bread and honours.

In art, too, there are certain common features: in both cases there is a strong tendency to realism in the lower branches, side by side with an equally strong stylistic intention in the realm of pure poetry and painting. Particularly noteworthy in this respect are the mystery and passion plays of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some of which are magnificent. Through these there runs the clear purpose to create typical drama which is to count not for once, but for always, to show not the events in the life of men, but in that of man: deed and sorrows, the descent into Hell and the Redemption of the whole race. Strangely enough, here as in expressionist drama, emotion not infrequently turns into unconscious caricature. The want of representative personalities is also common to both eras. Here, as there, we find only Lenins and Ludendorffs, Liebknechts and Mussolinis, who simply absorb the perversities of the age as in a concentrating mirror and reflect them back again. And in contrast to the scarcity of prominent masculine capacities we have the determined attitude of woman, who in both cases takes up a position that for centuries has been denied her. That the middle classes are today in a situation similar to that of mediæval chivalry will hardly be disputed. That theosophic tendencies take up more attention today than for a long time past is common knowledge. Indeed, the similarity extends even to certain externals, as, for instance, mixed bathing, which up till a few years ago offended the proprieties, the fashion of indrawn waists and padded chests for men, and bobbed hair for women. And most probably our century will seem as ghostly and unreal to a later age as the fourteenth century to us.

World's dawn

In his admirable research into the idea of the Renaissance, Konrad Burdach writes: "Unlimited expectation in men's souls — that is the basic feature of the fourteenth century." It is precisely that which we described at the beginning of this chapter as the world's-end attitude. Karl Kraus, too, in a fanatically imaginative, superhumanly delineated work which will permanently preserve the traits of our age, sees it apocalyptically as "the last days of humanity." But the world does not come to an end, often as it has been expected to do so, and such moods as this are usually followed by the reverse of what they suggest: they portend in fact the arising of a new world and of a new way of seeing and understanding it.

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CHAPTER IV

LA RINASCITA

"Beauty is the revelation of law."
Leon Battista Alberti

The two poles

"Problem" and "fact" are the names of the two great poles between which all human intellectual activity moves. What we do not yet feel to be a fact we call a problem; what we no longer feel as a problem we call a fact. But just as every problem tends towards melting into a fact, so every fact secretly tends to take refuge in becoming a problem again. In this endless but rising series of crystallization and sublimation, condensation and solution, consists the true inner history of the human race.

But out of this there arises, for the historian who surveys the marked-off culture-periods, a curious paradox. Each of these ages disposes of a certain store of problems and facts of its own creation, which are peculiar to itself alone, support and mould its whole existence, and are its life-destiny. But the facts which were established by the science and philosophy of those buried cultures, and were as a rule their greatest pride, appear to the eye of a later day as extremely problematical; while, on the contrary, the problems with which those earlier centuries wrestled represent for us even now perfectly positive cultural-historical facts.

A French thinker once said: "There is nothing more contemptible than a fact." We might add: or anything more uncertain and ephemeral. All the "exact" conclusions reached by former times have vanished again, securely as they seemed to be based on clean reasoning and keen observation. And it will be precisely so with our own. The only thing about our cells, nebulæ, sediments, bacilli, ether-waves, and the rest of our science's basic concepts that will interest a future world will be the fact that we *believed* in them. Truths are not lasting. It is only the souls that stood behind them that will last. And while every human philosophy is destined one day to have "no more than a historical interest," our interest in human history will never cease to be a philosophical one.

Culture consists in wealth of problems

Therefore we measure the power and height of a Culture not in the least by its "truths," "positive achievements," and tidy parcels of knowledge. What we ask for, in weighing them, is the intensity of their spiritual metabolism, their supplies of living energies. And just as the physical capacity of man does not depend on his girth, but on the strength and rapidity of his movements, neither is the life-force of the soul of an age determined by any other factor than its mobility and elasticity, the inward adaptability of its parts, the lability of its equilibrium: in short, by its wealth of problems. There lies the real sphere of spiritual productivity, and this is also the reason why the religious and artistic cultures come over into the succeeding age, while the purely scientific eras possess only a passing vitality. Science improves the general economy of existence, discovers new laws which simplify a little the equation of life, makes our planet a rather more comfortable and less fatiguing place of abode; but we accept her gifts as if they were bread and apples, with a certain animal satisfaction, without thereby rising to a higher state of mind or receiving the impulse towards a richer spiritual activity. The actual results of the human intellect, its finds and its hits, contain no tonic, nothing which quickens the pulse of our personal existence. We "lay them to heart," we say, but our contact with them is a matter of simple addition, not of multiplication, still less of exponents. The creations of art or religion, on the contrary, for all that they have done nothing to perfect the machine of life — have indeed further complicated the already sufficiently ambiguous business of existence, and helped to upset the sureness of the life-feeling on which man instinctively relies — have nevertheless always had at their disposal a secret capital of spiritual vigour; they are like wine, which frees our molecules to fall into a more rapid vibration, sends fresh blood coursing to our head, and quickens the whole of our circulation.

Then there have been whole eras which have the insipid taste of chemically pure water; we feel them to be too distilled, too clarified, we take no pleasure in them. They are deficient in problems. If an era is to have anything to say to posterity, it must be a living *spring*, containing not only the general elements of water, but various saline, *insoluble* elements besides, from which alone they acquire body, aroma, and colour.

The Italian Renaissance was an era of anarchy as regards its intellectual constitution, an era which no longer believed and had not arrived at knowing. And yet we have the feeling that life in those days must have been beautiful, rich, and vigorous.

The Italian microcosm

So far we have hardly mentioned Italy. This was intentional; for Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a world to itself. Many causes contributed to the isolation in which this country developed. Pure geographical reasons first of all, and these were of far more importance then than now. The peninsula, politically split up as it has been during its whole middle and modern history, was always inwardly united because its natural boundaries secured it very markedly and definitely from the rest of Europe: in the north were the Alps, and on the other sides the sea, while the Apennine chain runs across the greater part of its surface like a broad backbone, binding its various regions firmly together. Nature's favours, too — the great fertility of the soil, the mild climate (a happy mean between North and South), the abundance of navigable rivers, the wealth of beautiful and useful plants — give the whole land a certain homogeneity and at the same time elevate it above most other European regions. And this harmony was disturbed neither by a mixture of languages nor by a divergency of nationalities. The Italian folk-character is uniform, unique, and unintérchangeable; so fascinating a combination of good nature and perfidy, liveliness and laziness, form-feeling and untidiness, frivolity and bigotry, naïveté and cunning, superficiality and talent, is to be found nowhere else in the world. And nowhere does art stand so naturally in the centre of life, nowhere is musicalness so obviously a national dowry, nowhere are the people such born actors, and nowhere is existence so wholly adjusted to eye, temperament, and fancy. No country has such a past or such a capital — a city that has twice been for centuries at a time the brain and heart of Europe: first with the Roman Cæsars, then with the Roman bishops. Lastly, no country has so well-built and beautiful a language: sparkling and sonorous, varied and clear in form, with soft liaisons and pleasing cadences — a language which can only be called a natural song.

Actually Italy was always an urban land. From Etruscan days until the present, all decisive events have run their course in the towns. Rome in antiquity was called simply: *Urbs,* the city; Roman history dates itself *ab urbe condita;* the Christian Church of the West called itself the Roman Church after the same city, and in the Renaissance there were only city-states. Italy's culture was always an intellectual, well-mannered, *urban* one in contrast to the limited, rustic, agrarian culture of most other European countries; and we have seen in the previous chapter what a trenchant difference this means. There is the further consideration that Italy's towns were in fact all seaports, even when, as in the case of Rome or Florence, they were not directly on the coast; and nowhere does the curiously free, clear, and active mind characteristic of urban populations develop more richly and intensively than in the cities of the sea. But this strong common bond in origin, language, temperament, faith, history, and other conditions of life never amounts to uniformity in Italy. There were always enough characteristic differences between Lombards, Venetians, Tuscans, Umbrians, and others to make social, artistic, and political life extremely polychrome and to maintain a fruitful spirit of competition.

The "Latin formation"

The historical conception of the Renaissance has been greatly confused by the haphazard application of the name to a series of cultural tendencies which have little more in common than the fact that they were contemporary. We talk of a Northern — that is, a German, English, Netherland — Renaissance side by side with a French and even a Spanish. All such expressions are misleading. Nevertheless, they have dug themselves in, and we, too, shall have to use them, though remembering always that these are mere *façons de parler.* In countries outside Italy the movement was no more than an external " reception " of certain style-principles of the Italian High Renaissance, the " Classical " or " Latin," as it is called; but under this thin lacquer and coating national feeling still lived on with unimpaired vigour. In following the subsequent progress of European art one must always distinguish, quite clearly and unambiguously, this " Latin formation " that runs through all the strata of the geological structure, but varies greatly in extent in individual periods. It cropped out in Italy about the year 1450, and there had a reign of roughly a century; but by 1500 it had reached France, where it permanently maintained itself, despite the style-transformations over the rest of Europe, as the true French style — even in the height of the Baroque, of which Viollet-le-Duc, the leading art historian of France in the middle of the nineteenth century, could say that: "*Louis Quatorze clôt la renaissance.*" But even this did not go far enough, for the Classical style persisted in France until the Congress of Vienna and even (as for instance in Ingres and Puvis de Chavannes) later still. Much the same might be said of French literature, which in its essential traits always remained Classical — for the Latin spirit lives just as much in the Romantics who fought it, as in the clear, cool architectonics of a Maupassant or a Zola. The German Classicism of the eighteenth century was something altogether different from this; it leaned more towards the Greek and should really be called German Hellenism, while, as for England and the Netherlands, there has never been a real Classicism in those countries at all. We must postpone a closer inquiry into these points until we meet them in the march of history and be content for the moment to observe that the ghost of the Classical has frequently visited our continent in the course of the centuries (having never really vanished from the European vista), but that the length of its stay has varied in the various countries, and the forms it has taken have always presented great differences. But that which is understood in Italy by the *rinascita* was and remained entirely limited to that country, so that from the point of view of cultural history we ought strictly to speak of an Italian Renaissance only. The Italians themselves felt this very definitely. They were conscious of embodying a floraison of culture and manners such as no other nation in the world possessed, and for that reason — just like the Greeks and from a similar instinct — called all foreigners, whether Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, Englishmen, or Moors, barbarians.

Here again it becomes essential to propound the question: When did the Renaissance begin?

The rebirth to godlikeness

In one of the most famous passages of his *Discourse on the Dignity of Man* Pico della Mirandola makes God say to the son of Adam: " I have set thee in the midst of the world so that thou mayst the more easily see what is therein. I have created thee neither a heavenly nor an earthly, neither a mortal nor an immortal being, so that thou mayst be thine own sculptor and mayst chisel thy features thyself. Thou canst degenerate into an animal; but thou canst also by the free will of thy spirit *regenerate thyself* a godlike being." This, visibly, is the primary meaning of the Renaissance: the rebirth of man in the likeness of God. In this idea there lay a colossal "*hybris*" unknown to the Middle Ages, but also a tremendous spiritual impulse such as only modern times can show. At the moment when this idea appears on the horizon, the Renaissance begins. Now, this idea had already pervaded the Trecento, and almost all the Italian writers of the Renaissance, when they survey the Italian revival in retrospect, designate the age of Dante and Giotto as the epoch, the turning-point, or the great beginning. Particularly Vasari, the first historian of Italian art, groups the three centuries — Trecento, Quattrocento, and Cinquecento — as one unit of a grand national movement. Writing in 1550, he says that Cimabue made a start with his "*nuovo modo di disegnare e dipignere,*" and he goes on to differentiate between three sections: *parti,* or spaces of time: *età,* which substantially correspond to the three centuries. The first to come after the "barbarism of the Goths" were the new Tuscan masters in whom art was rediscovered, resurrected, reborn. The significance of these expressions — "*ritrovare,*" "*risorgere,*" "*rinascita*" — in this context is manifest; only later tradition has made them the special labels of the high Renaissance. The word "*rinascimento*" came into use much later and was unknown to Vasari, as was the now stereotyped word "Renaissance," which dates back no farther than Voltaire and the Encyclopædists of 1750. And Burdach, in his recent close and exhaustive study, has arrived at the same conclusion as the oldest Renaissance historian: "The picture of new life, of rebirth," he writes, "dominated already the age of Bonaventura, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Rienzi. It was active throughout the fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth became an idea of fixed validity. . . . To exclude the fourteenth century in this connexion is arbitrarily to set aside the many statements and views of contemporary historical witnesses."

Farewell to the Middle Ages

Taking all in all, we are forced to the conclusion that the "conception" of the new age occurred in Italy, as elsewhere, about the middle of the fourteenth century. It was then that

Rienzi produced his grand scheme for the political rebirth of Rome; that Petrarch and Boccaccio developed and carried out their program of a literary revival of the Classics; and that there came into being the "new style of painting," which made it its main business to seek spirituality by way of intimate and devout absorption in human emotions and destinies. With Dante's death the Middle Ages in Italy reached their end. Burdach indeed goes so far as to see in Dante the true originator of the Renaissance. This, however, is a view we are unable to take. It seems to us rather that it was precisely Dante that was the form in which the Middle Ages — with one last terrific gesture which threw its minatory shadow over the coming centuries — said *farewell* to humanity. It is as if, at the end of their earthly span, they sought once more to gather up in one tremendous throw all that they had to say. Had nothing remained of the Middle Ages but Dante's poem, we should still know everything we could ever know of that mysterious world. His unfathomable song stands at the threshold of the new age like a huge black monument in bronze, an eternal reminder of the silenced past. So magical and incommensurable was the power of this superhuman seer that his picture, though but a comprehensive symbol of the past, nevertheless puts every newer picture in the shade. Only the Middle Ages could have provided the spiritual premises for this miracle, which both concentrated all the knowledge of the age in a purely artistic form and lifted it into the sphere of faith. *The Divine Comedy* is, in every verse, encyclopædia, sermon, and dramatic epic in one. This sublime unity of faith, knowledge, and poetic creation could only have been achieved by a mediæval mind. It has been the unrealized dream of all artists ever since; but even to attempt such a creation in our time would only be the undertaking of a madman, for the conditions of our culture will first have to be changed from the foundations up.

Chronology of the Renaissance

There are, of course, many arguments against the assumption that the Italian Renaissance set in so early, especially when (as is usually the case) the arguments are based exclusively on its art history. It is in fact quite as easy to include Giotto and the Giottesques in the Middle Ages. The deliberate decorativeness of their composition, the naïveté of their execution, their joy in the anecdotal, their stylistic treatment of the animal world and landscape backgrounds, and, in short, the picture-book character of their painting generally, all combine to give them a mediæval look. Even an impressive work like the "*Trionfo della morte,*" where the figures are extraordinarily powerful, is really only Dante in paint — congenial paint — although it probably belongs to the later Trecento. And that is why most art historians make the Renaissance begin only with the Quattrocento, some even with the second half of that century, and they are not entirely in the wrong. Others take refuge in such conceptions as Early Renaissance, pre-Renaissance, or proto-Renaissance. But the difficulty is easily disposed of when we remind ourselves that there had been a political, a social, and, above all, a literary Renaissance while that of the arts of form was still in its infancy. When painters and sculptors and even architects were still cautiously feeling their way, detaching themselves only hesitatingly from the Gothic and hieratic, the Humanists were in possession of a strict and complete Renaissance program. We shall come back to their remarkable doings later.

Italy's start

Although the new movement in Italy set in at about the same time as in the North, its reception in that country was very different. Everywhere else the new conceptions and their implication induced a condition of complete disorientation, but in Italy life at once became enriched and broadened and more purposeful. This was because humanity in that country was in almost all respects generations ahead of the rest of Europe. If when we have been thinking of the "incubation period" we transport ourselves to contemporary Italy, it is like passing from grey and misty twilight into full sunshine. Up in the North everything is clouded and gloomy, clumsy and unfinished, confused and slow-moving. Here we step into a completely different world.

The first point that meets us is that Italy has struck the modern note in society and politics much sooner and more decisively than other countries. Chivalry and feudalism have vanished without a trace. Schopenhauer's two "Christian-Germanic stupidities," the "point of honour" and the "lady," had also disappeared. Love is mere sensual gratification, or else a loftier spiritual unity, but never a matter of sentimentality. The vassal had been replaced by the *condottiere,* for whom war was no romantic ideal, but a workaday profession and business which, having learnt, he sold to the highest bidder; that is, he supplied battles as the shoemaker supplied shoes and the painter portraits, the personality and viewpoint of his client being a matter of complete indifference. Personal differences were not settled by the complicated proceeding of the duel, but by a brawl, by hired bravoes, or, best of all, by poisoning, the technique of which had been brought to a fine art. Tournaments were to the Italians, as to their Roman ancestors, a vulgar sort of show for which slaves or actors were good enough. Wars, too, were a purely financial matter. Anyone who could afford enough mercenaries was in a position to rush his political or commercial rivals at any time. But the citizen never thought of taking a weapon in his own hand; he had better things to do. Business, domestic politics, science, art, pleasure, and social intercourse took up too much of his time for him to dream of devoting himself to time-stealing military training. And not only the professional soldier, but the fire-arm became a dominating factor in Italy earlier than elsewhere. Statesmanship had already become *Realpolitik,* a cool and subtle weighing of the deciding factors, supported by a clever and perfidious diplomacy which, especially in Venice, attained to a perfection of virtuosity. All our characteristic modern state-forms were also fully developed, from the extreme democratic republic, in which the " sovereign people " ineptly ruled, to the plutocracy, that modern form of the *tyrannis,* which disdains the outward insignia of power in order to rule the more securely by shrewd intrigue and adroit party-leadership, by magnificence in patronage, and by the irresistible absolutism of capital.

The heyday of early capitalism

Although an extraordinary rise in the standard of economic life characterizes the age all over the Continent, it nowhere went so far as in the great Italian trading centres. For the Northern races the transition to the money economy had been, as we have seen, incomplete and hampered by many moral and practical obstacles; but in upper Italy and Tuscany this early capitalism was already in its flower, having benefited by a succession of discoveries which immensely lightened and activated mercantile intercourse. Even today mercantile terminology employs almost pure Italian phrases, a reminder that the Lombards were the originators of these useful devices. Economics acquired organized purpose, foresight, and system. In his *Rules of Life* Alberti says:

"E ufficio del mercante e d'ogni mestiere, il quale ha a contrattare con più persone, essere sollecito allo scrivere, scrivere ogni compera, ogni vendita, ogni contratto, ogni entrata, ogni uscita in bottega e fuori di bottega; sempre avere la penna in mano." The merchant with a pen in his hand — here was something quite new!

As early as the fourteenth century the great Florentine banking-house of the Peruzzi had sixteen European branches, stretching from London to Cyprus, and its commercial connexions penetrated into central Asia. The Florentine gold piece (*fiorino d'oro*) was the most valuable and esteemed coin in the whole of the West. Besides the Peruzzi there were the Capponi, the Bardi, the Pitti, the Rucellai, and the Strozzi — familiar names, some of these — from the splendid palaces that have immortalized them. The fabulous rise of the Medici did not begin until the fifteenth century, but it did not take them long to become the foremost financial power in Europe. Their only close rivals were the Pazzi, famous for the great conspiracy in 1478 in which Giuliano de' Medici fell. The attack took place within the cathedral during mass — and the Pope was one of those who had a hand in the game. One of the Pazzi threw himself on Giuliano and stabbed him so furiously with his dagger that he inflicted a considerable wound on himself. The insurrection was overcome in the course of the day, and the rule of the Medici more firmly established than ever. We see that plutocracy then differed essentially from the plutocracy of today; it was an affair of heroic passions and fanatical daring, and lives were risked for the hegemony of the firm. Our own great rival commercial houses, on the contrary, confine themselves to the tamer methods of bribing voters, buying journalists, and inspiring questions in parliament. In Rome the Chigi were the supreme banking-house. They financed a succession of popes, and their chief, Agostino Chigi, was a friend of Raphael and the builder of the Farnesina — "a merchant in earning," men said, "but a king in splendour" — and shared with Lorenzo de' Medici the surname *il magnifico*. The commercial rivalry between Venice and Genoa, which was fought out so bitterly and so brilliantly in this period, is familiar to all. But what makes the financial life of all these city republics unique in their own age is its far-seeing vigour and grandiose indifference to conscience. In the centre of the business moral (if this contradiction in terms is permissible) stood money-making as an aim in itself, as a passion capable of forming a life, as the strongest mode of expression of the will-to-power. And nothing is more characteristic of Italy's economic life than the fact that the Jews played only a very subordinate part in it. They were not needed — the native business talent was far greater even than theirs.

The Renaissance city

All this hangs together, as we have seen, with the development of the urban life. Italian cities were by that time real cities, something quite different from the Northern, which looked like walled-in mediæval villages by comparison. If we compare Bruges with Venice, Cologne with Milan, Lübeck with Genoa, or even the Paris of that day with Rome or Florence, we have the impression of passing from a dark and crooked side-street to a broad, airy avenue. We have seen in the previous chapter that the architects and artists made little effort to improve the decoration and comfort of private houses, but devoted themselves almost entirely to public buildings, such as churches, town halls, municipal markets — an obvious residue of the mediæval collectivist feeling. But in Italian towns it was quite otherwise. There, individualism had made great progress, and everywhere there arose palaces, villas, and private chapels which combined regal splendour and exquisite taste. The wealthy decorated their halls with the most precious paintings, and their tombs with magnificent monuments, the erection of which they superintended with care during their lifetime. In the Northern cities the characteristic building was, then as before, the cathedral, but in the Italian, the *palazzo*. Further, in Italy class prejudices were very considerably weaker. We have only to look at the rise of the Medici: a family of middle-class parvenus who never aspired to as much as the outward tokens of nobility, but for generations maintained their sovereignty over the most powerful, flourishing, and cultured city in the peninsula solely by means of their money, virtuosity in the handling of men, wit, and talent for brilliant display. In other parts of Italy also, the modern nobility of talent had triumphed over the mediæval nobility of birth. At Milan the *condottiere* family of the Sforza had risen to the highest dignity; in the Papal domain any man who possessed sufficient force and shrewdness could become a duke or a cardinal; and even in Venice, that relatively aristocratic community, the patriciate consisted in the main of tradesmen who had made fortunes. But it must not be forgotten that all these rulers had such extraordinary inward *noblesse* and natural capacity for command that their origin ceased to matter. Without possessing any positive human greatness, they had an incomparable moral *grandezza.*

Comfort

This was evident even in the externals of life: in domestic splendour and comfort, in decoration and equipment of every sort. The framework in which they lived their lives was not only richer, but more refined than elsewhere. It was a sincere, mature, and unforced setting. It was unostentatious, proportioned, harmonious, and, above all, *choice,* by which we mean physiognomically indicative of the possessor. In the North, on the contrary, men's surroundings were impersonal, conventional, haphazard; parvenu, overloaded, accentless, childish, clumsy, and rustic. A superior Italian dwelling-house was unthinkable without large, bright rooms and high, airy windows, costly rugs and arrases, hangings of gold-worked leather or patterned silk, furniture of precious woods, valuable pictures in artistic frames, marble fireplaces, and decorated ceilings, majolica, bronzes and ivories, crystal vessels, fine linen, and splendid oriental embroideries. Then there were the broad, paved streets — the Italian's greatest delight — with already many a carriage-and-pair; the country villa with its grottos and fountains, gardens and avenues, an institution completely unknown to the Northerner, who had not advanced beyond a poor garden and shack, where the townsman could keep chickens, grow vegetables, and spend a few hours of his evening. Lastly, the Italian had cultivated the art of the toilet and cosmetics — unguents and beauty-lotions and perfumes, hair-preparations and coiffures — to an extent which would startle even our own day.

Artistic meals

The luxuries of the table were also on a much higher level than elsewhere. Meals were served with an artistic, decorative, and recreative rather than a culinary motive, being primarily designed to please the eye, not the palate. The following is a description of a famous feast given at Naples in 1476 by the Florentine Benedetto Salutali: As hors d'œuvre each guest had a small dish of gilded cakes made of pine-apple kernels, and a majolica bowl of milk pudding; then came a galantine of breast of capon decorated with coats of arms and mottoes; the dishes set before the guest of honour had a fountain in the centre which sent up a fine spray of orange-water. Then came various meat dishes, including venison, veal, chicken, ham, pheasant, and partridge, and presented with these was a large silver dish of little birds, which flew out when the lid was lifted, and artificial peacocks, which spread their tails and burned fragrant incense in their beaks. For dessert there were various sweet dishes: tarts, marzipan, and dainty little cakes. There was Italian and Sicilian wine, and between every two guests lay a list of the fifteen vintages provided. At the end scented water was provided for the washing of hands, and a great pile of green branches was set up which, impregnated with costly essences, perfumed the whole room. On comparing this dinner with the meals described in the foregoing chapter, we feel that we have come from a peasant's wedding to a court banquet. At another feast, given in Rome by Lorenzo Strozzi, the guests were received in a darkened room hung with mourning; skulls adorned the walls, and skeletons shone with ghostly light from the four corners. In the centre was a black-covered table laid with two skulls and four large bones. The servants lifted the skulls and disclosed fresh roasted pheasant, and between the bones lay sausages. No one dared to eat except the Pope's court jester, Fra Mariano, a famous glutton whose appetite was proof against superstition. After the guests had recovered from their alarm, the folding doors opened and a brightly lighted room was seen decorated to represent the starry firmament. On taking their seats the guests had a fresh surprise. Dishes and bottles jumped up from under the table before each of them without any mechanism being visible. Agostino Chigi, the banker mentioned above, once gave a banquet in Rome at which he had all the gold and silver vessels thrown into the Tiber after use. This would suggest Russia, were it not that the whole thing was a farce, the banker having had nets placed along the shore to enable the vessels to be fished up again. At another feast, when the Pope was present, Chigi had a special fish served that had been brought alive from Constantinople. On leaving, the Pope said to him (with the witty and exquisite courtesy that is only possible in Renaissance Italy): "I always thought, Agostino, that we were on a more intimate footing." Agostino replied: "And the modesty of my hospitality has confirmed your Holiness's supposition afresh." All these accounts go to show that eating was anything but the chief interest of these meals.

The world of the profile

In our search for individualities in the North we drew almost a blank. Italy, on the contrary, one might say without undue exaggeration, shows practically nothing but individualities. Whereever we look — in the plaques and portraits; in the monuments and coins; in the biographies, letters, speeches, and memoirs; in politics, philosophy, art, and society — we see innumerable sharply defined heads and unique physiognomies, consciously original types and determined, not to say obstinate, profiles. Take, for instance, the Medici medallions, faces complicated even to ugliness and full of double meaning, refusing to yield up their ultimate secrets. Or, choosing at hazard, take the two popes painted by Raphael. First, Julius II, *il pontefice terribile,* a powerful personality exuding strength at every point; syphilitic, sodomite, general, and despot, of whom Hutten said that he tried to storm Heaven when he was refused admittance. He lived at peace with no one, made war on all his neighbours, rode in the thickest rain of bullets, planned to reconquer Constantinople and Jerusalem, pulled down old St. Peter's because it did not please him artistically, endorsed simultaneously the festival program for the Roman carnival and the arrangements for his own funeral, and had a choice of eight different wines brought to him even on his death-bed. Yet he was the only Pope to leave his hoarded treasures in Sant' Angelo to his successor instead of to the rapacious nephews; and he was also the one great man of his time who recognized the greatness of Michelangelo. Side by side with him we have the commonplace figure of Leo X, *il papa Lione:* short-sighted, short-necked, fat, constantly perspiring, puffing and blowing; supported by two servants when he walked (or rather dragged his heavy body along); lethargic and sleepy; particularly prone to nod during the polished lectures of the Humanists; but enthusiastically awake to insipid jests or empty pageantry, and a gourmand by proxy, taking huge delight in watching his court jester consume masses of eggs or quantities of pheasant; and an incredible spendthrift (it was said of him that, had he lived longer, he would have sold Rome, Christ, and himself), who did not leave enough to pay for the candles at his funeral. Yet his reign was known as the Golden Age, because Rome was at that time the admired focus of European culture and because Humanists in his pay extolled him as the splendid patron, although art had come to this high flowering without him and even in some ways against his will. And even posterity, though without financial incentive for complaisance, has accepted the fraudulent title without demur.

Birth of the revolver press

The pen, indeed, begins now to be a dominating force in general and we witness both the first vigorous strides of the press and its ultimate and most logical form of being — the "revolver press." At first the standard was set by the whole social phenomenon of the Humanists, who, in spite of their meritorious work in raising both the general standard of culture, and interest in the Classics in particular, were undoubtedly a moral plague; for by both example and precept they taught that unabashed insolence, absolute lack of principle, measureless self-flattery, dialectical juggling, and complete unscrupulousness in the choice of the weapons of controversy were the chief means of arriving at fame and success. With a complacency and directness which even today could only be equalled in a gutter press, these men made a practice of selling their opinions; and all the devices employed by the present-day press were handled by them in their day with an accomplished virtuosity — the twisting of facts and suspecting of motives; the intrusion into private life; the apparent objectivity which makes the attack so much the more telling; the hidden stab which is but an earnest of the open one to follow; and so on. Already, too, they quarrelled among themselves with exceeding bitterness; their power, then as today, lay not only in their art, their facility, and their success in putting difficult subjects into popular and pleasing form, but also in their control of material that was only accessible as a whole to themselves. The only difference is that now it is news matter (so-called) that it is the privilege of the papers to circulate, whereas then it was a question of imparting the rediscovered material of Classical culture. In so far, they stood above the modern journalists, for not only were they almost all extraordinarily learned, but they had an enthusiasm for the Classical which amounted to a craze; and, therefore, debased as they were morally, it is impossible to deny them a certain idealist quality in their intellectual aims. Of course, many of them were morally quite irreproachable personalities, and others, again, developed such vigour and ingenuity that even posterity cannot fail to see in them veritable giants of their trade. Two of them in particular have become as immortal as Raphael or Machiavelli: namely, Vasari, to whom reference has several times been made, and Pietro Aretino. Vasari's dictatorship of taste had an unchallenged validity such as no critic has since enjoyed. He was himself a practising painter, and incidentally a fairly mediocre one, thus providing one more of the many instances of a critic being born of creative impotence. In addition, he combined with these activities the business of an art-dealer, and in this again he has many followers. Even so intransigeant a character as Michelangelo realized what he owed to a Vasari, and on receiving a copy of his work, replied at once with a decidedly flattering sonnet, although he was anything but impressed by the contents and particularly by the information and criticism concerning his own work. But all who dared to oppose Vasari's critical outpourings, or failed to rank him as an artist with the greatest of his time, were persecuted by him with the utmost rancour and unfairness. In such cases he did not even stop at forgery, and he made many an artist literally impossible by these means.

The divine Aretino

Still more dreaded was the "divine Aretino," father of the modern publicist, of whom the people asserted, not without reason, that he had the evil eye. He drew pensions simultaneously from the two great rivals Charles V and Francis I and received rich presents also from other potentates — the kings of England, Hungary, and Portugal and many a smaller prince. Even the Sultan sent him a pretty slave-girl. But quite apart from that, he was a finished technician in the art of intellectual extortion. As an example we need only record his dealings with Michelangelo. He began by writing letters expressive of his great admiration for the master's art, dwelling at the same time with great skill on his own powerful position: "I," he wrote, "whose praise or blame can do so much that almost all recognition and depreciation is bestowed by my hand, I, whose name inspires respect in every prince, have no other feeling for you but that of reverence. For there are kings in plenty, but only *one* Michelangelo!" In consideration of which he proceeds to ask for "some little bit of his drawing." Michelangelo fulfilled his request, but the gift seems not to have been to Aretino's liking, for after a few further exhortations, which remained unanswered, he sent Michelangelo an absolute model and gem among dunning letters, in the course of which he says: " Sir, now that I have seen the whole of your ' Last Judgment,' I recognize, as far as the beauty of the composition is concerned, the grace for which Raphael was famous. But as a Christian, who has received the holy baptism, I am scandalized by the unbridled licence with which you have permitted your mind to approach that which forms the content of our highest religious feelings. This Michelangelo has become so masterful, I suppose, because of his great fame, that he would show people that in him piety and faith are as completely lacking as art is perfect. Is it possible that you, who in the consciousness of your godlike eminence, do not condescend to mix with ordinary mortals, could bring such things into God's highest temple? . . . A luxurious bathroom, and not the choir of the holiest of chapels, is the place for such paintings. . . . But indeed, if the pile of gold bequeathed to you by Pope Julius, so that his earthly remains should rest in a sarcophagus of your making, could not keep you to the observance of your duties, how can a man like me square accounts with himself? . . . But God evidently willed that such a pope should be what he is on his own merits and not appear to become something through a mighty structure. But that does not alter the fact that you have not done what you ought, and that is called stealing." He closes his letter, in which the denunciation of his victim's irreligiousness, an accusation of theft, and hypocritical grief over genius led astray are skilfully mingled, with the words: " I hope that I have now proved to you that if you are *divino* (*di vino*), I at least am not *dell' acqua.*" And this letter, which Aretino naturally managed to have freely circulated, did in fact injure Michelangelo incalculably. It is in keeping with the paradoxicalness of the Renaissance character that Aretino, apart from the infamies which were, so to speak, imposed on him by his profession, was the kindest, most helpful and generous of men, with a touching fondness for children and animals, a tireless benefactor and host, whose house stood open to all, a man who befriended the rich and obtained release for prisoners, gave to every beggar, distributed with a liberal hand all the money squeezed from others, and was free with advice and influence to everyone in distress. A " secretary of humanity," he once called himself; " *il banchiere della misericordia* " was the name given by a friend. Even in his rascalities, too, there was a certain breadth and dignity. We need only look at the portrait painted by his friend Titian — something both imperious and indicative of genuine intellectual force looks out of it.

La grande putana

Something of this sense of personal power runs through all the men of that time. The words of Francesco Sforza, when the Milanese erected a triumphal arch in his honour, may stand as a motto for the Renaissance: "These are the superstitious trappings of kings; but I am the Sforza." But woman also awoke to an individual life. She was placed on an absolute equality with man, not only socially, but in point of education. And, as it usually happens in times of emancipation, the most emancipated of all, the grand cocotte, *la grande putana,* rose to a supreme position. One of these, characteristically named Imperia, kept house on a royal scale, read Latin and Greek, was painted by Raphael as Sappho, and became after her death an almost legendary figure. A poet sang of her: "Two gods have given great gifts to Rome: Mars the Imperium, Venus the Imperia."

L'Uomo universale

The universities naturally benefited by the general uplift of intellectual interest. Everyone now flocked to them. The jurists of Bologna and Padua and the doctors of Salerno in particular were famous all over Europe, and it became the fashion to study in Italy as it had formerly been the fashion to do in France — Germany's turn was not yet, for her young academies were then still in a very backward condition. But it was not upon this that Italy's fame principally rested. It was precisely the absence of any specializing tendencies, the fact that every leading man embodied a whole university and much more besides, that made her peculiar richness and splendour of intellectual atmosphere. For humanity was then sufficiently ripe to achieve the mastery in all things, and yet not old enough to have reached the sobering and paralysing belief that life is only long enough to achieve mastery in *one* thing. Far from this, the Renaissance ideal was the *uomo universale.* A prominent Humanist would be philologist and historian, theologian and jurist, astronomer and doctor all in one. And not only all the great artists, but many small artists as well, were at once painters, sculptors, and architects, and often highly gifted poets and musicians, acute scholars, and diplomats into the bargain. Human talent was not yet forced into special channels, but flowed beneficently as one free stream over all fields. We, on the contrary, came into the world with brains ready pigeonholed, as it were. We cannot imagine how a man can know or do more than one thing. We paste a particular label on everyone and are surprised, suspicious, and offended if he does not act up to his label. This comes from our culture being so completely dominated by the savant (and the mass-produced savant at that) who confines himself to a single subject and displays in all other spheres the helplessness and artlessness of a child or an illiterate. But it is in the very nature of the true artist to know everything, be open to all impressions, have access to all forms of existence, possess in fact an *encyclopædic* soul. In any period of artistic culture we find, therefore, that its gifted men are all distinguished by high versatility. They engage in everything and can do everything. In Greece a man who wished to be considered prominent was obliged to stand out in practically every department: as a musician or an orator, and equally as a general and a boxer. And the specialist was positively despised as a common fellow (*banausos*); and in the Renaissance, talent, *virtù*, was in the fullest degree identical with many-sidedness. It is only in degenerate cultures that the specialist appears.

The Renaissance public

Another factor was that these artists had an incomparable audience waiting for them, such as has never been known since and only once before — in Athens. There was an indefinable aura of giftedness surrounding mankind of those days, a curiously charged, tense atmosphere which must have spurred every productive mind to its highest output of force. To us artistic pleasures — theatres, picture palaces, novels, concerts — are a pleasing addition to life, things which refresh and distract and perhaps ennoble us, but are in the last resort only costly luxuries and superfluities, things contributing to our well-being like champagne or imports. We could conceive of life without them. But in Athens or Florence art was a function in man's life, as indispensable to his vitality as flying for a bird. The Italian carnival processions, games, and feasts were not, as now, a coarse popular entertainment or an *apéritif* for jaded society, but an important, vital occasion in everyone's life, and everyone wished to take an active part in them — just as Americans today do in a meeting.

The story of the artist's creating solitude, out of himself alone, for himself alone, guided solely by his inner genius and unmoved by outward success and fame, is one of the many current untruths that are universally believed for no better reason than that they go uncontradicted. The artist does not produce out of himself. He produces, as we have already said, out of his age: the whole web of its customs, opinions, hobbies, truths, and not least its errors, are his source of nourishment; he has no other. The artist does not produce for himself, but for his age. Its understanding, its lively reaction, is his source of power, only through its echo can he have the assurance of having spoken. Artists who have the misfortune to be born posthumously, as Nietzsche puts it — that is, are suited for a higher air or a richer soil — have always a suggestion of transplantation, asymmetry, arrested development — Nietzsche himself, standing in the midst of his age like an exotic luxury-plant, is the best example of this. It may be the fault of the soil, which fails to exude sufficient moisture; this is the case when the age is too poor, too empty, and too soulless. Or there may be insufficiency of sun and ozone, of air and brightness; this is the case when the age is backward and, so to say, not at its best. We may assume that the capacities of the human race always maintain a certain steady average; possibly they may on the whole be slowly progressing; but it is certain that within the limits of this evolution they remain much the same relatively to each other. It is not easy to imagine that for centuries together geniuses suddenly shot up from the earth and that for generations afterwards the harvest is utterly poor again. But we can well believe that the soil conditions are one time particularly favourable and another time wretched; that at one time — unfortunately the majority of times — hundreds of seeds either do not sprout or make no proper progress, and that now and then everything which is in any way vital grows to the utmost limit of its capacities. A particular plant-embryo will become, in the temperate zone, a straight, healthy, correct plant, no more and no less. If it strikes a strip of soil which is either too unwatered or too raw, the result will be either an alarmingly dry, ragged, discoloured, and bad-tempered growth or an unnaturally aged one, slinking about the ground cripple-wise, an asthmatic dwarf-specimen. But if the seed is sown in the rank soil and hot, moist air of the tropics, it grows into a mysterious structure of forms, colours, and dimensions that no one would have thought it capable of becoming.

One of the advantages of the Romance over the Germanic nations was that their climate was so extraordinarily favourable to genius. We might almost go so far as to say they produced geniuses even when they had none. With them the great man is ever the intensified expression of the whole nation. Goethe said of Voltaire that he was France; and it might equally be said of Calderon that he was Spain. But in the Germanic countries genius has almost always the appearance of an unaccountable exception, a living protest, a happy chance; Goethe could not have said of himself that he was Germany. Neither will anyone seriously maintain that Shakspere is the type of the Englishman, Strindberg of the Swede, Ibsen of the Norwegian, Schopenhauer of the Prussian, or Wagner of the Saxon. Yet of the numerous outstanding creative men of that Italian Renaissance it can hardly be denied that one and all they were full-blooded Italians who only put into luminous form what the multitude inarticulately felt. In the comparatively small centres there was a jostling, an intimacy and spiritual nearness, which must have been of the utmost value to the creative worker. Each of the city republics was a world unto itself, or a microcosm living in perpetual fluctuation, excitation, and tension. As in a beehive a high temperature and an animating self-heat is engendered by the closely packed, vibrating individual bees, so in these communities there was a distinctive *température d'âme*, and even the vileness and passion that was discharged were stimulants that increased the energy of life and promoted the arts.

The "disunity" of Italy

This brings us to the common lament over the "political disunity" of Renaissance Italy; and indeed, as seen from the standpoint of the national politician, it is a sorry sight. In Milan the Sforza family were in power, in Florence the Medici, in Mantua the Gonzaga, in Ferrara the Este; in the States of the Church the pope, in Naples the Aragonese; and besides these there were the two sea-republics Venice and Genoa and the numerous smaller sovereignties. All these states not merely fought among themselves in open warfare or hidden political intrigue, but were also split within themselves by social and political parties. But it is comparatively rare to find in history that intensified national spirit and enhanced political power go hand in hand with a mounting cultural development. Neither the Greeks of the time of

Pericles nor the Germans of the dying eighteenth century were the fortunate inhabitants of a united national state. Their political conditions were desolating. And nevertheless each people in its day was the strongest spiritual power-source on our planet. The Romans, on the other hand, at the time when they ruled the world, produced only meagrely gifted inheritors in art and science. The Latin Renaissance, which Charlemagne at the height of his power strove to bring about, was a miserable failure. As for France, a threadbare puffed-out gold-brocade civilization was all she produced under Louis XIV, and the empty lacquered Empire style under Napoleon. Germany displayed no important cultural development either after 1813 or after 1870, and the decade following the act of union was her most banausic and uninspired cultural period, while defeated France entered upon a time of new and overwhelming development in the domains of painting and the novel.

Intimacy, the true human intercourse, is only possible among a small number of individuals. Just as teaching, to be really effective and inspiring, must be organized on the basis of comparatively small classes, so must a state be not disproportionately large if a personal relationship between the leaders and the nation, and between the individual elements of the nation, is to be realized. Life in the Italian Renaissance retained its human character even in its greatest errors, whereas the life of today is unhuman; that is, incapable of being surveyed as a whole, and mechanized and soulless to boot. The same applies to the Middle Ages, whose inwardness and profound *realism* prevented the building up of any great state-formation. A castle, an autonomous townlet, a hamlet — these are realities; but a world-empire is a lifeless, empty concept. The Romans achieved imperialism; the Greeks did not, because they were more talented. And for the same reason that an Ibsen drama or a Mozart opera is unthinkable in an open-air theatre, true spiritual culture will only take root in relatively small state-entities. The richest spiritual developments have always originated from dwarf states: from Athens, Florence, Weimar. And Italy, now no longer " cut up," has in her two generations of unity achieved nothing, in any sphere, that is not a pale and meaningless copy of French civilization.

An intensified spiritual culture *can* go hand in hand with political " elevation," military " expansion," and national " uprising," but this is anything but the rule. The true cause of every higher development, in any case, is some great idea, which takes so powerful a hold on the masses that it renders them creative — that is, spurs them to concerted action on a large scale — for there is no other way in which the masses may be creative. This idea may express itself in the form of politics; it may also simply take the form of an exceptionally artistic atmosphere created by the collective mind. We trace the flower of Greek culture back to the Persian wars. But what were the Persian wars? An idea! The idea that Hellas, this tiny peninsula of a peninsula, must not be simply eaten up and digested, comfortably assimilated, by that colossus of nearer Asia, which was big and nothing else; that the *spiritus* must necessarily be stronger than the *moles*, quality more deserving and more capable of life than quantity. The Greek citizen who fought and won on that occasion had thought more, felt more, observed more, and in general lived more inwardly and intensively than the Persian with his wagon-laagers, monster fleets, gorgeous tents and harems. At bottom, it was Homer and Heraclitus who won the victory. But the fact of their winning was only secondary to and consequent upon the far more important fact of their being there at all. And then, three centuries later, Greece was *conquered*, but this again proved to be a secondary matter: the Romans became intellectually dependent on the Greeks, because Homer and Heracles were still there.

The return to the Classical

In what, then, did the " idea " of the Renaissance consist? We have already hinted at it. Man realized — or rather *thought* that he realized — that a godlike creative nature, that he himself indeed, was a sort of God. It was the age-old Prometheus idea breaking out afresh with new vigour. And the formula by which it expressed itself was: Back to the Classical! Here, now, lies a problem. Inevitably we wonder how it was possible that a nation, at just the moment when a new vital current was running through its culture, arrived at the notion of imitating another, and a long-buried, culture.

First of all we should remember that such " rebirths " — the re-connexions with the Classical, " receptions " of Classical cultural material into the course of European history — are quite common and almost a manifestation of a biological law, since they recur with serial regularity in the course of the centuries. Alexandrinism itself, already, was fundamentally a renaissance, a conscious and deliberate return to the literary traditions of the Classical Age. And it is common knowledge that the whole of Roman literature was no more than a repetition of Greek forms — strictly speaking, therefore, a mere literature of translation. The Middle Ages also had had two renaissance periods, the Carolingian and the Ottonian. Neither was the Italian Renaissance the last. We shall meet with many similar movements as this book progresses.

It has been suggested further that the Italian Renaissance was nothing but a continuation of the country's history; that the spiritual connexions with antiquity had never been severed, that the remains of Roman architecture and sculpture had at no time totally disappeared from the city-picture and the landscape, and that the national character, though considerably modified by infusions of other blood and new cultural influences, had in all essentials developed along a line of prolongation which had its origin in ancient Rome.

But there is a much simpler solution. The Italian Renaissance was actually no rebirth at all, but simply something new. It owed very little to the Classical, and that little was quite external and of no decisive significance. " Back to the Classical " was nothing but a convenient, decorative, and universally comprehensible catchword, similar to the " Back to Nature " preached by the eighteenth century; and Petrarch's contemporaries no more went back to the Classical than did Rousseau's to Nature.

Petrarch

Petrarch was the first great propagandist for the Classical Age. He was tireless in digging up, collecting, copying, and collating old manuscripts, and it is to him we owe, among other things, the discovery of a great number of Cicero's letters and orations. But in the whole of Classical literature he really cared only for Cicero, whom he regarded as the vessel of all wisdom and oratorical art. He had indeed a Greek copy of Homer also, but he could not read a word of it. For the rest, he was anything but Classical in spirit, and what gives him his epoch-making character is something very different from his reawakening of Cicero. He wrote the first great love-poems in the Italian language; he created the sonnet-form, which has ever since remained the favourite of Italian authors and readers; and above all he was the first man whose reactions were specifically modern: the poet of *Weltschmerz* (a heterogeneous emotion utterly unknown to Classical man), the creator of the half-sentimental, half-piquant life-confessions in the Rousseau manner, and the discoverer of the charms of wild romantic scenery (the first to attempt mountain-climbing, a thing abhorrent to the ancients). His attitude towards the Classical is also entirely Christian. " O kind, salvation-bringing Jesus," he cries, " true God of all science and all mind, I am born for Thee, not for Science. How much more godlike is one of these little ones who believe in Thee than Plato, Aristotle, Varro, Cicero, who, for all their knowledge, do not know Thee." And of the Scriptures he writes that although fewer flowers may be culled from them, more fruits are to be found there than in worldly writings. Taking all in all, his enthusiastic Ciceronianism would seem merely to have helped him to acquire a smooth, pleasing, accessible form which can make it appear that *much* had been said, whereas in truth only much had been *said:* on this basis he developed the type of the didactic epistle, which corresponds roughly to our modern feuilleton. More than one of his own contemporaries on that account chose to regard his method of exposition as having a play-actor element in it, and the same reproach has often been made in later times. And it is true that all his work, even his famous erotic poetry, has a touch of pose and deliberate staging for effect. It strikes us as not being quite genuine, and neither was it. For his way of life and his poetry by no means coincided. He wrote glowing verses to his one and only Laura, but at the same time he carried on a succession of other loves. He sentimentalized about simplicity, fleeing from the world and the bucolic, but was perpetually occupied in trying to gather benefices. He gave out that he despised fame, but at the same time busied himself exceedingly to secure his investiture with the laurel crown. Nevertheless, across all this there cuts a passionate honesty and heroic effort towards self-cognition. In fact, he was a perfectly modern character.

The pseudo-Renaissance

A purely external thing was the study of the Classic as practised by Boccaccio, who has been named the second reviver of the Classical. He took over this " line " from his ancestor Petrarch quite mechanically, and probably only because it had become highly fashionable. His attempt to learn Greek was not very successful, the only result being a very poor translation of Homer into Latin. Posterity, therefore, has judged him quite correctly in remembering him only as the author of the graceful indecencies of the *Decameron.* The two most important Humanists of the fifteenth century, Æneas Silvius (later Pius II) and Poggio, were inwardly antagonistic to the Classical world-outlook. The latter calls Alexander the Great an infamous brigand, the Romans the scourge of the globe, and says that loyalty, piety, and humanity were nowhere to be found in the ancient world. The only place where Greek was studied was at the Platonic academy in Florence, founded by Cosimo de' Medici. Most prominent of the academicians was Marsilio Ficino, the admirable translator of Plato — but also of Plotinus, whom he placed at least as high and took as the model for his own philosophy. Here, too, then, the tendency was un-Classical, for neo-Platonism was notoriously synonymous with the dissolution of autochthonous Greek thought and its deflection into mystical speculations that were related to Christianity. The practice of exact philology is nowhere to be found among the Humanists. Texts were calmly worked over, corrected, and supplemented; and contemporary writings were produced as classics with a barefaced assurance. In most cases the pseudo-Classical Renaissance authors were less concerned to assimilate the ancient writers inwardly than to plagiarize a stereotyped stock of phrases in a rough schoolboy-like manner. Laurentius Valla was the first to attempt to bring out a scientific philosophy and grammar; he fought against the idolization of Cicero (whom he ranked below Quintilian) and in his sensational pamphlet *De elegantiis* brought proofs to show that not one of his contemporaries could write Latin properly. More, he declared the endeavour to transplant Classical forms of life into the present to be absurd. Politian also was an opponent of the one-sided Ciceronians. The face of a bull, or a lion, he wrote, seemed to him far more beautiful than that of a monkey, yet the monkey bore much more resemblance to man. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, too, one of the greatest minds of the Renaissance, issued a warning against the partisan glorification of Classical antiquity; on one occasion he makes the mediæval Schoolmen say: " We shall live for ever, not in the schools of the syllable-coiners, where they argue over the mother of Andromeda and the sons of Niobe, but in the circles of the wise, where men seek out the deeper foundations of things divine and human. Approach man, and you will see that even the barbarians wore their mind, not on their tongues, but in their bosoms." And his nephew, Francesco Pico, writes: "Who will be afraid to confront Plato with Augustine, or Aristotle with Thomas, Albert, and Scotus? Who is prepared to give Æschines and Demosthenes priority over Isaiah?" Finally, towards the end of the fifteenth century, there came the powerful reaction under Savonarola, the last heroic attempt to stifle the new spirit and get back to Gothic: into the fires lighted by the great preacher of repentance went, among other earthly follies, the works of the Classics and the Humanists. This whole movement was, it is true, only an interlude, but for a time it influenced the widest circles, and it left its mark indelibly on painting, poetry, and philosophy and forced a whole series of the most outstanding artists completely to reverse their world-picture and their modes of interpreting it. The mundane masters of pleasant drawing-room art, the hymners of life's delirious satisfactions, were transformed into melancholy brooders and world-scorning ascetics. Writers of tender lyrics became hieratic emotionalists. Some artists never touched a brush after hearing the thunder of Savonarola's preaching. Then, with the opening of the sixteenth century, came the "fall of the Humanists." The whole world turned against them, no one could any longer put up with their pedantry and quibbling, their vanity and love of advertisement, their frivolity and corruption, their superficiality and spiritual barrenness.

From all this it would seem, first, that the Italian Renaissance was almost a purely *Latin* one; secondly, that for most of the time it concentrated on *literature;* thirdly, that even this literary reception was predominantly theoretical, *academic;* and, fourthly, that the elements taken over from antiquity were not the typically Classical, but mainly those which paved the way for *Christianity.* The Renaissance was "pagan" only in certain of its representatives and even then only in the negative sense that they adopted a sceptical (in some cases even atheistic) attitude towards Christian beliefs. The positive features of the religion and world-outlook of ancient Roman paganism were only manifested in some few childish externals.

The Cinquecento

It was only in the early decades of the Cinquecento — as a short intermezzo, that is, between Gothic and Baroque — that Classicism was a comprehensive, vitalizing, and dominating force. In architecture and in the work of certain painters such as Mantegna or Signorelli it began earlier, but in the new century it became a universal passion and almost an *idée fixe*. The great word of release was — contour. Plastic took command of painting. At the same time, as the sequel to the discovery of certain Classical sculptures, there set in the reign of a sober, yet proud, will-to-simplification. These miserable decadence-products of a cold, empty, prosaic, and unoriginal art became (though they were not even understood) accepted models, and under their despotic pressure all artistic production was sterilized, smoothed, dried up, and desouled. The proud unadorned simplicity which had triumphed in the incomparable buildings of the Quattrocento was now applied to all the manifestations of life (though by its very nature it could not continue save as the privilege of a highly gifted few) and under the hands of smaller men became deformed into mere arrogance, complacency, and tiresomeness. Plainness turned into meanness, clarity into shallowness, purity into anæmia. The Roman Imperial style, an art which had been set to the requirements of the hard and meagre spirituality of the Roman profiteer, was now suddenly to be the exclusive norm, the highest ideal. In the sixteenth century, too, began the all-powerful and oppressive influence of Vitruvius, whose text-book became an absolute canon for architects. Alberti went one better. In his *Trattato della pittura* he writes: " It was easier for Classical artists to become great, for their school tradition trained them for these highest arts, which cost us so much effort; but all the greater will be our renown because *without masters, without models,* we have discovered arts and sciences of which formerly nothing was heard or seen." With the Cinquecento all the marvel and mystery, chaos, unfathomableness, and contradictoriness of life faded out of art.

Now, ruins and torsos could only exercise a very limited influence even in those days, and Classical painting could have none at all. Whatever it amounted to, then, was due to the poets, rhetoricians, and theorists. And when we examine the whole thing by daylight, what exactly had been incorporated? A few column forms and roof profiles; round arches and cassetted ceilings; medallions and garlands; some tricks of speech and metaphors; Latin names and heathen allegories — things of the periphery, one and all. But when it comes to calling the pope *pontifex maximus,* the cardinals senators, the city dignitaries consuls and prætorians, the nuns vestal virgins; when Giovanni becomes latinized as Janus, Pietro as Petreius, and Antonio as Aonius; and when a poet is fatuous enough to sing: " *O sommo Giove per noi crocifisso* (O highest Jove, crucified for us) " and another to place the ever-burning lamp of the Madonna-picture under the bust of Plato: we can only regard it all as a mere fashionable craze or a bizarre masquerade. The whole point is that these men were *not* creating a new art, language, and world-attitude under the sudden overwhelming influence of Classical models. This new way of looking at things was already latent in them, and they only fastened on those models because they saw, or thought they saw, a similar world-feeling embodied therein. The Roman ruins had always been available and formerly in even greater profusion; Vitruvius had long been known; but it was only now that it occurred to the Italians to orient themselves on these patterns. It was because they themselves were rational, definite, terrene, and sceptical that they could turn themselves into Classical Romans. And, as regards literature, how significant it is that out of the wealth of preserved material it was precisely Cicero who was elevated to the sole supremacy! His watery but impetuous decorative art, the convenient stucco brilliance of his eloquence, which could be readily adapted to any mental structure, his externally imposing popular-encyclopædia equipment, which cunningly concealed his inner poverty — all this corresponded so well to the crying need of the time that, for instance, there were individual Humanists who refused to read anything whatever except Cicero or to use a word which did not occur in his works.

The will to stylize

Yet the period called the High Renaissance — which was really a *low* point of the Renaissance movement — was not without a certain bigness, due to its grandiose will-to-stylization, which penetrated all its vital manifestations and endowed its existence with a peculiar outstandingness and majesty. Everything had the character of a joyous "representation," deliberately opposed to nature because it was intended to *differ* from it: to be less natural, less vulgar, less matter-of-fact and styleless, and more worthy and formally perfect, more decorative and tasteful, well tempered and laid in careful folds. In considering conditions in the North we recognized costume as being one of the most characteristic marks of the spirit of the age. We find this also in the South, but with the tendency reversed. Here costume aims at an effect of royalty, solemnity, passionate aloofness. Glaring colours and bizarre forms are avoided. The fundamental tone is given by the broad, flowing line, by drooping folds and undulations. It was expected of a woman that she should have a vast bosom, big hips, and well-developed limbs — have them or pretend to have them — so that her outward appearance had nothing small, domestic, or dainty about it. Heavy, solemn stuffs like velvet, silk, or brocade were favoured; also long trains and wide puffed sleeves, wide cloaks, and high coiffures built up not only of artificial hair, but in part of white or golden silk, the fashionable colour being a queenly golden blond, which women tried to achieve by using every description of secret lotions and dyes and by lying for days in the sun. Every woman tried to have the air of a Juno, every man the dignity of a Jupiter — hence the majestic long beard. The youthful and the girlish styles were equally despised. A man in his prime and a woman in full bloom, with a touch of the virile, were the only types appreciated. For men's dress serious, dark unobtrusive colours were the rule; women wore padded skirts which, weighing often several pounds, helped to enlarge the hips, bodices which forced the breasts upward, and exaggerated soles and heels. In walking, standing, sitting, and general behaviour nonchalant superiority and controlled repose (*gravità riposata*) were the ideals at which they aimed. There was no more walking, only moving. Life was to be a perpetual and showy reception, a great society scene in which carefully schooled men and women, self-possessed to their finger-tips, could display their imposing art of perfect behaviour.

The basis of the Italian Renaissance at its height was extreme rationalism, but this very soon emigrated to France, and there settled permanently. Michelet says: *L'art et la raison réconciliés, voilà la renaissance;* and this formula says everything. The Renaissance willed to take the world and class it, dispose it, articulate it, make it clear and comprehensible. From this one motive came all its creating and destroying, its affirming and denying, its discovery and overlooking, recognizing and failing to recognize. It tried to obtain a hold on existence, to organize it, bring it into line with view-points from which orientation would be easy and certain. Its ideal in every domain was proportion, measure. The highest of its achievements under the influence of this tendency was the rhythmic structure and linear harmony in its buildings, and the means to that end were as brilliantly conceived as they were simple. But in every other department also there was the same mathematical-musical principle: in the lay-out of gardens, in furniture and ornaments, in the uniform and transparent arrangement of paintings and reliefs, and in the symmetrical conception of the human body and the landscape of its environment. All the artists of that age were unsurpassed masters of composition. But beyond that point their advance was astonishingly small.

A Sophist age

The Italian Renaissance possesses a great similarity to the age of Pericles, which should really be called the age of the Sophists. For the Peloponnesian War, atheistic democracy, and Attic comedy were all Sophist phenomena. (We are not, of course, thinking of sophistry in the current sense, for that is not a characteristic of the philosophical school, but merely an insulting term invented by Plato.) Fundamentally all the Classicist or Golden ages have a streak of the Sophist. Even the Augustan and Napoleonic eras present inward coincidences with the Periclean: the triumph of purifying logic in art, world-outlook, and constitution. In the Renaissance the similarities cover, first of all, political institutions: in both cases we have city republics with a more or less definite *tyrannis* on a democratic or pseudo-democratic basis. It was quite in the manner of the Medici that Pericles exercised his authority as mere "First Citizen," basing his power not on heredity or divine right, but on political acuteness, engaging and energizing personality, and the glamour of the arts of which he was the patron. Figures like Themistocles or Alcibiades, again, with their combination of talent and characterlessness, political activity and lack of patriotism, challenge comparison with the great *condottieri*. Then, too, the great Italian civic communities exercised a hegemony over a number of smaller or weaker towns which was as ruthless and selfish, as detested and capricious, as that of the major Hellenic cities over their "allies." They fought among themselves too with just as undiscriminating a cruelty and perfidiousness, with an equal absence of the idea of national unity; and yet at the same time the consciousness of their common culture and its superiority over that of all other nations gave them a strong feeling of cohesion. So that, in sum, there was as much solidarity in the treatment of artistic and spiritual problems as there was incurable particularism in their political relations. The analogy extends with equal force to internal politics: in Renaissance Italy as in Athens the bourgeois was at the mercy of a megalomaniac Polis that claimed omnipotence and manifested the extremes of arbitrariness, vulgar jealousy, delation, greed, corruption, extortion — envying, persecuting, and not seldom exiling or killing its best citizens. The fate of Dante and Savonarola, again, is an eloquent counterpart to the treatment of a Phidias and a Socrates. Another feature is the striking and unprecedented rôle played by the hetæra in the Renaissance as in the earlier age; yet another is the artistic and social importance of homosexuality; and finally there is an analogy between the brief, intensive flowering of the two cultural periods and the suicide, as it were, of both at the height of their splendour. Plutarch said of the Athenians of the fifth century that they were abnormally great in good as in evil, just as the Attic soil brought forth the sweetest honey and the most poisonous hemlock. And the same may be said of the Italian Renaissance.

The Humanists

To the Sophists, of course, correspond the Humanists. Picture their boundless self-intoxication, their keen dialectic, their passion for detractation and embittered rivalries among themselves — rivalries that frequently meant brawling and even murderous attacks — their rational and critical habit: their moral subjectiveness, which made man the "measure of things"; and their religious scepticism, which verged on atheism, though without attacking the external forms of the reigning faith. Wandering from place to place as virtuosi, they, in contrast to their predecessors, exploited their stock of knowledge and accomplishments in as many markets as possible. Of eloquence they made an extreme cult (even so fine a mind as Æneas Silvius asserted that nothing else governed the globe in the same degree), and if, in spite of their weaknesses and defects, they were immensely run after, lauded and fêted with an enthusiasm that seems to us almost pathological, the cause is just the same as in that other era: they spoke from the heart of the age, whose profoundest desires and needs they divined with marvellous sagacity. In their nimbleness, too, their restlessness and adaptability, their noble curiosity and thirst for knowledge, and their perpetual receptivity for all things relating to the mind and human advancement, they were the legitimate representatives of their generation.

The Humanists were indeed the most respected men of their time. Everyone competed for their services and their company. Socially they were placed far higher than the artists of form, which is curious, seeing that it was in the latter that all the creative force of the Renaissance was exclusively concentrated. Even the court jesters often took a higher social rank than painters and architects. Their talents were made use of, and they themselves were admired, no doubt, but they were regarded nevertheless as superior lackeys. Only Raphael formed an exception, on account of his striking social gifts, his personal amiability, and his eminent presentableness. When Vasari in his "*Lives*" described himself expressly as a painter, he was consciously performing a gesture of exquisite courtesy towards his colleagues, whose attention he thereby drew to the flattering circumstance of an author's having risen from their ranks. And Alberti advised artists to form friendships with poets and rhetoricians, because these would provide them with material.

The "literary" character of the Renaissance

This brings us to a notable point upon which we have only briefly touched, the "literary" side of the Renaissance. The Humanists provided the artists not only with "material," but with the *whole* intellectual material, the foundation and subsoil: the world-picture and association-material, the canvas, and the program.

We said in the previous chapter that plastic art — and in particular painting — is the form of expression in which every new way of understanding the world finds its earliest outlet. It is quite evident why this should be so. If we watch the development process of the individual, we see that, with a child, the first impressions which it receives and works out for itself come through the eye. It can see properly much sooner than it can hear or — still more — think. And the chronological succession in the growth-process of the collective soul corresponds to that of the child. The new content which fills the life of the individual culture-periods is first grouped through the visual arts: painting, sculpture, architecture; then through the arts of thought and interpretation: science, philosophy, and "literature." First the new *senses* come; and it is at a much later stage that we ask after the *sense* of them.

But the Italian Renaissance forms an exception to this rule. There literature came before the arts of form. The arts of word were being classicized and revived while the plastic arts were still mediævally in bondage or purely naturalistic — whence this contradictory anomaly? Here, again, the enigma is readily solved, for the whole thing turns out to be an optical illusion when we come to look a little closer at this precocious literature which outran the plastic arts. It is on quite a different plane from the other arts, in that it is no art at all, but an entirely non-productive, sterile, academic program-work and style-juggling. It was not until the sixteenth century, when the plastic arts had long since bloomed and faded, that a truly creative literature, a poetry worthy the name, made its appearance, and even then it still lagged far behind painting in its whole spiritual attitude. The epic of Ariosto and Tasso is without aerial perspective, without knowledge of anatomy, without the force of supreme individualization, without true dramatic sense or real portraiture, and in composition on the level of the quite primitives: built on strips, linear, without depth, ornate, and, above all, destitute of that noble simplicity and naturalness which is the glory of the Renaissance artist.

The truth is that in those two centuries there was not first word-art, then form-art, but *only* form-art — that is, if by art we mean something new, creative, personal, a *birth*. The statement, however, needs modifying to this extent, that undeniably this form-art was in part called into being by scientific discussion, research, and reminiscences. This is not usually the case, and the fact may be said to have been one of the curses of the Renaissance, for it caused the whole movement to appear intellectual, artificial, forced, manufactured, and posed; and these characteristics intensified from generation to generation, so that at the height of its development (when the fatal program was at last understood in its entirety) there set in a soullessness and coldness which of necessity choked the seeds that might have progressed to fruition.

The rift in the Culture

An ugly destructive crack runs through all the higher spheres of cultural activity from this point. Art became a matter for connoisseurs, wisdom was confined to the learned, and custom-ethic to good society. Neither the painter, the sculptor, nor the poet now created for all humanity as a seer and herald of great sacred and inspiring truths; his efforts were designed for the intimate circle possessed of hypotheses, appreciative of fine shades and capable of grasping " implications." Architects no longer, as in the Middle Ages, built their churches and cathedrals with the consciousness of being the executants of the universal yearning for God, but as the employees of art-loving connoisseur-popes, splendour-loving princes, or fame-loving private patrons. Thinkers meditated for a select public of experts; poets polished their verses for a privileged class of epicures; artistic handicraft brightened the houses of the rich only, music became a lofty science, and war, law, politics, and commerce were all specialized and professionalized. The *palazzi* bore the stamp of the new spirit distinctly on their faces. They all have a cold, inhospitable, barring expression. It is difficult to believe that people live in them, that there are really houses belonging to the façades, for they look like nothing but stern, haughtily repellent ornamental screens and scene-painting. The portraits show us lordly men and great ladies. The Mother of God is no more a humble maiden (*donna umile*), but the proud *Madonna,* sovereignly receiving the three kings. Christ becomes the unapproachable Lord of hosts, the infant Jesus a stiff, well-behaved crown prince, conscious of his future rank; the Apostles are cool, self-conscious cavaliers. It was a world of upper-class people painted for upper-class people: for people with " nurseries," people to whom violent words, hasty movements, and unrestful lives are a horror; who have grown up in the atmosphere of wealth, comfort and *bon ton;* who never let themselves go, never become intimate, and know how to control themselves even in moments of terror and shock. Only that is painted which is in good taste. No emotions — emotions are vulgar; no story — stories are for the masses; no detail — detail smacks of the market stall; no uncleanliness, ambiguity, or backgrounds — a gentleman is never ambiguous; no loud colours and harsh screaming contrasts — the best people do not scream. To create an impression of the utmost repose and refinement in sculpture and architecture, the stone was left quite white, and this was believed to be a genuinely Roman practice, so little did anyone know of the Roman empire's passion for colour materials — for green, red, yellow, spotted, veined, striped, or flamed varieties of stone — or how glowingly it painted its façades, reliefs, and fruit-pieces, and how strongly it tinted its triumphal arches, statues, and portrait busts.

It was at that time that the type of narrow-minded, superior, conceited expert and scholar was born, who infests European culture to this day. In the Middle Ages humanity was divided into *kleros* and *laos*. Now we see a second and much deeper cut being made; henceforth there were the uneducated, the uninstructed, the "people," the *new laymen:* and the scholars, the key-holders of all life's riddles, the academic devotees and initiates. A new aristocracy arose, which was far more impatient, inaccessible, caste-proud, inhuman, and exclusive than the old.

Predominance of form-art

Here we reach the limit of the parallels that can be drawn with the age of Pericles. In that age there was a whole culture, and that in the double sense: first, a culture for all — for anyone could understand a Sophocles, a Phidias, a Socrates, and even "scholars" like Thucydides and Hippocrates — and secondly (presumably as a result of the first), a culture which in every domain achieved the highest. The Renaissance Italians, on the other hand, for all their universalism (which was purely technical and external), remained totally unproductive in several important branches of culture. Their only original product in the realm of music is the *caccia,* a song form in two-part canon with instrumental accompaniment, a form of composition which renders in tone-colour all the noises of everyday life, such as raindrops, the shrill bargaining of the market-place, street cries, girls' chatter, animals' voices. They possessed no creative philosopher and only after the dying-down of the Renaissance do we meet a musician and a thinker of world magnitude — namely, Palestrina and Giordano Bruno. Their dramatic record was limited to a few witty satirical farces which showed a pretty fancy and sound observation of life. Even Machiavelli's *Mandragola* is only superior light reading, and everything in the serious genre is mere display-stuff, though of a splendour, imagination, and finish which we can hardly visualize nowadays. It is true, they painted, modelled, built, and above all *lived* in so overwhelmingly dramatic a fashion that they may well be forgiven their lack of written drama.

It is in pictures that the history of the Italian Renaissance is written. The painters have mirrored with the tenderest understanding and utmost force of expression all the windings of the strange path which the public spirit of this land followed from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, it would be rash to pick out any individual as the absolute representative of the spirit of the age; though there are certain stars of the second and even third magnitude that might be considered as nearest to the mark. Pisanello, for instance, found an incomparably rich language for his naïve and yet appreciative delight in the picturesque detail which characterized the men of the Quattrocento; equally Benozzo Gozzoli made rushing symphonies of the inexhaustible, foaming joy of life of the new generation, its youthful passion for festivals, processions, and buildings, and its general view of existence as an unending carnival. The age of Savonarola, on the other hand, found an impressive monument in the chill, ascetic, and spiritualized figure of Perugino, who was nevertheless a thoroughly amiable and gentle personality. Another exponent was the painter Giovanantonio Bazzi, known in the history of art by the significant name of Sodoma, who gave a vivid picture of the overripe period of the Renaissance, when sensuality became sybaritic and then went on to real depravity and perversion. But in speaking of the Renaissance these are never the names which come up. So long has it been a convention to leave Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael in undisputed supremacy, as (so to say) The Triumvirate.

Michelangelo

And yet Michelangelo stands completely apart. He has been acclaimed as the perfecter of Classicism and as the initiator of the Baroque, as the last of the Gothics and as the father of Expressionism. He is all that — and none of it. He belonged to those extremely rare minds that are equally one-sided and all-sided, who constitute an entire world of their own and have no pupils and no contemporaries. He belonged to the Megatheria of humanity, who obey and are subject to different conditions of life from those of our species; to the few monumental statues in the pantheon of the human race that have about them something that is timeless and placed outside nature. These men might have lived at any time whatsoever, or indeed at no time: for we of today still cannot believe that they ever existed. There is no "age of Michelangelo." He towers above his time like a rugged giant crag or a colossal inaccessible lighthouse. Neither is there any "school of Michelangelo"; or at least there should not have been one. For the illusory belief that anyone could learn anything from him led to the most senseless productions and put art history hopelessly off its track.

Even in outward things he stood in no relation to his age, for he was as little suited to his environment as his environment to him. Everything about him breathed misanthropy. He was not made for society and intercourse. His outward appearance was repellently ugly: the expression of his face was "Malayan"; he was short and unhealthy-looking and always badly dressed; shy, suspicious, taciturn, constantly grumbling at himself and others; without any relaxations and frugal to the point of shabbiness. He lived in one wretched room with a loutish manservant. His nourishment was limited to bread and wine, and his recreation to a few hours' sleep in his clothes. He was intolerant, and spiteful towards other artists; and his entire self-absorption, though there was every reason for it, did not make him more attractive. And so we see a life of eighty-nine years without a gleam of happiness or friendship and (although he was extremely susceptible and felt himself particularly drawn to Vittoria Colonna and Tommaso dei Cavalieri) without a single hour of love, being on the contrary filled to the brim with despair. "No mortal sorrow was unknown to me," he wrote of himself; and it is a fact that he possessed in the highest degree the "gift of sucking poison out of everything," as Lichtenberg once put it. No, he was not lovable, this Michelangelo — but, then, such abysmally "apart" giants, such heroes from a strange glacial world, very seldom are. He had a perfectly clear consciousness of his timeless grandeur, of his immense distance from others. His attention was once called to the fact that his busts of the two Medici were not like the originals. "Who will notice that ten centuries hence?" was his reply. All other Renaissance work falls into the category of miniature compared with his; the others were "beautiful," he is big; even Leonardo's soulfulness looks dulcet beside him.

Leonardo

Coming now to Leonardo, he too cannot really be regarded as representative of the Renaissance; for one reason, because we know so little about him. There is something like a fine mist about his figure. Even Burckhardt, who turns the mysterious pages of the Renaissance as if it were an open book, calls him the enigmatical master. He is as unfathomable as the famous smile of his Monna Lisa. And his other paintings are also sheer puzzle-pictures which seem to point behind and beyond themselves. A strange ghostly emptiness lies over them: not a hollow emptiness, but the emptiness of infinity. In his hands even the landscape becomes distant, strange, and reticent. And while for almost all other artists the deepest essential is to *say* something, the something in them that is passionately seeking an outlet, he retires completely behind his creations. The "Last Supper" is perhaps the most objective piece of work that ever came from a brush. It is symbolic of his whole nature that he was the first great master of chiaroscuro, of *respirazione* and *sfumato;* that he taught that one must paint as though the sun were shining through a mist, and insisted that bad weather was the best light for faces. For his own personality, too, is dipped in a magic chiaroscuro, a floating atmosphere, and its outline is hardly discernible through the soft, pale contours which shroud it. It is typical also that two such enigmatic figures as Lodovico Moro and Cæsar Borgia should have been just the ones to retain this restless spirit permanently in their service. His universatility, which verges on the miraculous and is unique in world-history, makes him an unseizable Proteus. He was painter, architect, sculptor; philosopher, poet, composer; fencer, leaper, athlete; mathematician, engineer, instrument-maker, festival organizer; he invented sluices and cranes, mill machinery and boring-machines, aircraft and submarines; and all these activities he practised not as a clever amateur, but with as perfect a mastery as if each of them had been his lifelong occupation. Then, as if fate had wanted to wipe out his features still more thoroughly, his masterpieces have been either completely destroyed — for instance, the portrait of Francesco Sforza and the "Battle of the Standard" — or handed down to us only in a very damaged condition, as in the case of the "Last Supper." The clearest impression of his impenetrable nature is found in the austere, reserved, and, as it were, veiled face of the red chalk drawing in which he portrayed himself.

Raphael

There remains Raphael. And he did really, and in the most complete manner, represent his age. He did so — and this is extraordinary — not because of anything projecting, sharply profiled, or towering or self-willed in his personality, but rather just because of his *lack* of personality, which enabled him to be purely a receptive medium, purely a mirror, absorbing all the rays which struck him and reflecting them. Raphael's work is the careful, clear, complete, and beautiful — too beautiful — record of the Cinquecento; and, as the Cinquecento was in a sense the signature of the Renaissance, its strongest and most concentrated expression, his work is genuinely the essence of the whole Italian Renaissance. This mixture of extraordinary and unmeaning qualities explains the great difference of opinion which has always existed with regard to him. His painting is an incomparable cross-section and average of his age, and to be this it was quite indispensable that he should be only an average person. But as this age was full of greatness, splendour, and wealth, it is equally natural that he who had drunk in all this should re-radiate its happiness, wealth, and imperishable splendour to posterity.

Raphael's vicissitudes of fame

Michelangelo, even so soon, remarked that Raphael had got so far as he did by his diligence and not by his genius. And it was that same Michelangelo who opened out a new era, in which Raphael was completely neglected: the era of Baroque. Its most important achievement was the breaking up of line, and Raphael, the master of contour had, therefore, nothing to say to it. Indeed, Bernini, the dictator of this period of style, issued a positive warning against imitating Raphael. Even in Louis XIV's time, when a return to Classicism took place, the court painter Lebrun was ranked higher than Raphael. When the Sistine Madonna was brought to Dresden, Augustus II had it set up in the throne room, saying in reply to the court officials, who were beside themselves at the idea that the throne should make way for the picture: "Make way for the great Raphael!" Yet the Dresden art authorities of the day insisted that there was something vulgar about the Child in the Madonna's arm and that His expression was peevish. Even in the nineteenth century it was maintained that the angels in the picture had been painted by pupils. Boucher advised one of his pupils, who was leaving for Rome, not to give too much time to the study of Raphael, who was, despite his fame, *un peintre bien triste.* That Winckelmann, that founder of German plaster-Classicism, should have been greatly impressed by Raphael is understandable; yet at the same time he had no doubt whatever that his friend Raphael Mengs, one of the dreariest allegorists who ever lived, was greater than Raphael Sanzio. At the dawn of the nineteenth century it did seem for a time as if absolute supremacy in painting was at last to be accorded to him — at any rate the "Nazarenes," who then more or less set the tone, could not praise him enough. But on looking closer we see that the Raphael whom these enthusiastic young men praised so extravagantly was not the real Raphael. When they spoke of him, they meant the Raphael of the pre-Roman period, and the pictures which he painted on arriving at his full maturity seemed to them a falling off. It was the Nazarenes and their near relations the Romantics who were responsible for that hardy legend of Raphael as a noble, guileless youth, passing through life like a sleep-walker, producing as the result of effortless supernatural inspiration, and the complete naïveté of a favoured child, the exact opposite of what Michelangelo had said and, indeed, of the fact. It was this Raphael who for nearly a century was the joy of the German bourgeois of the age of poker-work, transfers, and art needlework. But then the Pre-Raphaelites came along. They placed the peak of Italian art in the period before Raphael, in whom they saw but a cold and soulless virtuoso. Their spokesman was Ruskin, who regarded Raphael as the embodiment of hollow false elegance. Referring to the cartoon "The Charge to Peter" in *Modern Painters,* he writes, for instance: ". . . the moment we look at the picture we feel our belief of the whole thing taken away. . . . It is all a mere mythic absurdity, and faded concoction of fringes, muscular arms, and curly heads of Greek philosophers." Raphael, he goes on to say, blotted out all that thoughtful persons might have fancied for themselves about the life of Christ by his vapid fineries and obscured the "questioning wonder and fire of uneducated apostleship" under an "antique mask of philosophic faces and long robes." Edmond de Goncourt called him the creator of the Mother-of-God ideal for Philistines, and Manet declared that a Raphael made him literally seasick. So it will be seen that there was never any lack of connoisseurs ready to say with Velasquez: "To tell the truth, I don't like Raphael at all."

The "darling of the gods"

The year 1517 is known to all as the birth-year of the Reformation, when Luther nailed his ninety-five articles on the door at Wittenberg. In that same year Raphael painted his Sistine Madonna, of which everyone thinks when his name is mentioned. And about the same time Count Balthasar Castiglione finished his *Courtier*, a work which might be called a sort of Renaissance Bible. It is the "Knigge"[1] of those days, its hero is the Gentleman as the time conceived him: adroit, dignified, with a public manner and a tact that is equal to every occasion, the counterpart of the modern gentleman, but a gentleman full of elegance, serene and unworried. It was this perfect cavalier, radiating charm, beloved of princes and women and gods, whom Raphael painted and Raphael *lived*. And so the picture has gone marching on through four centuries.

But Raphael the darling of the gods had, for our ideas of life, one great fault. Darlings of the gods are, in fact, insipid. They are as tiresome as the "blue sea of the South," the "pure spring day," the "sweet baby in the cradle," and all perfectly pure, perfectly balanced, perfectly happy things. We desire something different in life and in art.

The basic error of Classicism

Raphael once said: "To paint a beauty I must have several before me, and as I have not enough models, I paint from memory, from an idea that I have in my head." What he means is that, as there is no female beauty alive in nature that is perfect in every part, he resorts to assembling an ideal beauty in his imagination from individual reminiscences. This view that it was the mission of art to represent perfection was Raphael's fundamental error and the fundamental error of the whole of Classicism. Great artists are always appearing from time to time who seem to prove to us for the moment that Classicism (that is, strict order, unity, straight lines, harmony, colourless transparency) is the flowering of art. But they prove it more or less *in usum delphini* — that is, for themselves alone. The fact is that there are here and there "Classical" creations of so supernatural, unreal a beauty that our inclination for the time being is to see in them the summit of art and to regard everything else as a more or less successful groping attempt in the direction of these heights. But it is a delusion. These phenomena are not (so to say) incarnations of the rule (though one might think so, since they are the most regular), but interesting, admirable monstrosities. It is *irregularity* that is the essence of nature, of life, of men; regularity is an artificial distillation or a rare accident. The most regular form produced by nature is a crystal; yet every mineralogist knows that the perfect crystal does not exist. And even the approach to regularity makes the crystal appear dead. Occasionally we meet such things as completely circular mountain cones, radially symmetrical animals, an absolutely uniform light or climate; but these are more or less the freaks of nature. We regard Classical creations with wonder and admiration, as we do a glacier; but we should not like to live in a glacier, and we could not if we would. We pitch our settlements in the thicket, among the lower mountains, on the undulating plain, or by the ever restless water. We are, incurably, Romantics and not Classics; and this is inevitable because nature also can only create romantic things.

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[1] Adolf Freiherr von Knigge's *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (1788), a well-known book of manners. *Tr.*

Raphael sets no problems: and that is the main grievance against him. Hermann Grimm in his beautiful life of Raphael says: "Raphael has no intentions. His works are understood at a glance. He creates, like nature, without intention. A rose is a rose, no more and no less. Nightingales are nightingales. We do not need to probe any deeper. Similarly Raphael's work is free from personal additions. With him the most deeply moving subjects present absolutely no personal note; as if the artist's own experience had been worked in too thoroughly for his personality ever to emerge." Let us accept this analogy and have the courage to confess that rose and nightingale have both something vexing about them. They are a little *too* lovely. And they are *nothing but* lovely. Involuntarily we ask ourselves: "Lovely! — and is that all?" Raphael affects us just so. A true work of art ought to give us something we can deal with. It is not enough for it to unfold itself with lazy majesty before our eyes and say: "I am beautiful." It must point beyond itself: to castles which it can open up, corpses which it can revive, dreams which it can unravel. It must be an interpreter of life, a thing to hold to one's ear and consult in any situation. Every work of art has a tendency, and therein indeed lies its chief value. It has a tendency, or, in other words, it has a person behind it: a person capable of question and answer, thoughts and passions. But there Raphael's figures stand, "free from personal additions," nicely painted blue and red like sugar-sticks or tin soldiers, and it is impossible to escape the impression that these famous female figures might just as well figure on a soap-box or be packed in with a scent-bottle. "Sistine chocolate" is not at all inconceivable. The same may be said of his composition: would not the "Philosophy" in the Stanza della Segnatura make a splendid theatre-curtain? The famous gloss which is so special to Raphael's works often becomes merely satiny, and his handwriting too calligraphic. Too often we can trace the mark of his patron Leo X, who was all polish and empty form, who understood neither Leonardo nor Michelangelo — who, indeed, knew very little about art in general, music perhaps excepted. This purely musical side of his nature he seems to have conveyed to Raphael, and with some success, for (as we have seen) Raphael was adaptability itself; Bembo too, the Humanist cardinal, was able to imbue the artist with his own unmeaning rhetoric.

This is not to say that he was not one of the most perfect painters who ever lived. He was. But the point is, we are here concerned with him as a cultural symbol, not as a painter, any more than we are concerned with, say, Napoleon as a strategist, or Luther as a theologian, when we are dealing with them under their symbolic aspects. Moreover, it is precisely Raphael's perfection which makes him so distant, strange, and dumb to us. "The inadequate is productive," said Goethe in one of his profoundest moments. Every whole thing, every complete thing, has been completed and we have done with it, relegated it to the past. A half-thing is still capable of development and progress and is looking for its complement. Perfection is sterile.

To sum up, we might say that there are two species of genius: the special, non-recurring, isolated species, the solitary ones whose greatness consists in their being a *unicum*, a monstrosity and psychosis; a timeless, more-than-life-size exception. And there is the other species, which represents the emotions and thoughts of all the world, but so comprehensively, with such art and clarity, that an enduring type is the result. Raphael was one of these latter, and this is what Hermann Grimm must have meant when he said of him: " There is something delightfully mediocre and ordinary about him. He is intimate with all, everyone's friend and brother, no one feels inferior beside him." His sweet women's faces, his clear figure-grouping, his bright, strong colour harmonies are understood by all. He is Monsieur Toutlemonde's idea of a painter. Raphael speaks to everyone — really, therefore, to no one.

Machiavelli

We said just now that the Italian Renaissance produced not a single philosopher. But it produced something else of equal value — Machiavelli; a practical observer, narrator, and critic of extreme clearness, keenness, and range of vision. Machiavelli had not merely the most experienced, discerning, orderly, logical large-scale mind, was not only the brain of his age, but was positively a sort of national saint and patron of the Renaissance who summed up its life-will, its whole spiritual structure, in a few bold, illuminating formulas. He was a politician and nothing but a politician, and therefore he was naturally an immoralist. All the accusations that have been hurled at him these four centuries are rooted in the critic's lack of just that quality which he so completely embodied, the gift of logical thinking. Those who condemn, or even merely attempt to refute, him forget that he did not set out to be a systematic philosopher, an ethical reformer, a teacher of religion, or anything of this description; the exclusive aim and content of his work were the description of men as they really were and the deduction of practical results from this reality.

He regarded the State as a natural phenomenon, a scientific object to be described and analysed, investigated closely as to its anatomy, physiology, and biology, without any " point of view," without theological premisses. The zoölogist does not sit in judgment on sharks, man-eating tigers, and cobras or think them " wickeder " than poodles, hares, or sheep, but seeks solely to establish their life-conditions and the most favourable assumptions for the flourishing of their species. This is Machiavelli's standpoint towards the " ruler-phenomenon," and he carried through the task of investigation with such wonderful success that it has been said that all modern history is a " running commentary " on Machiavelli.

Machiavelli was as imaginative and passionate — and as corrupt and false — a reviver of the Classical as any of his contemporaries. In his mind he always saw the Polis, and in its Latinized form to boot. At the head of his theory of politics stands the proposition: " The State is power." He wished for a return to the armed nation, the Old Roman civic patriotism, the national kingship. He forgot that such a reconstruction was impossible in an age that had the revolutionary experience of Christianity behind it and pan-European and even world-politics imminent on its horizon. His ideal, as everyone knows, was Cæsar Borgia, who was not only a conscienceless rascal, but — what in a statesman was far more compromising — an adventurer without guiding principles.

" Immoralism "

This brings us to the moral balance-sheet of the Renaissance. The mysterious atmosphere of beauty and vice, wit and violence, charm and rottenness in which the Renaissance is embedded has always stirred the imagination of posterity. It has evoked an expansive indignation in the bourgeois brain, which has not the power to conceive of a world other than its own well-lighted, policed, and paragraphed one; and equally it has fired the enthusiasm of every incurable adolescent brain, which all its life never gets beyond a certain perverted puberty-imagination. Obviously both are wide of the mark.

We have first to take into account that most of the Renaissance crimes were committed by official personages — that is, more or less in an official capacity — and that these same people were, outside this professional practice of robbery and murder, often quite charming and even of a noble disposition. It is even said of that most brilliant specimen of a Renaissance horror, Pope Alexander Borgia, that in private life he was good and gentle, without rancour, a friend and benefactor of the poor. Most people who were not concerned with politics led as peaceful and harmless an existence as the people of any other period. Among artists particularly, in whom, if anywhere, the characteristic features of the time were represented, there is practically none of the proverbial Renaissance immoralism to be found. There was never any lack, either, of great opponents of public immorality; the big noncompromisers, gloomily heroic supermen of moralism — Savonarola above all, the "conscience of Florence," although in his dæmonic vigour he embodied but the second half of the Florentine ideal of the *soave austero*. A great prophet, but no Christ in Christ's own sense, for he lacked proportion, humanity, the grand forgivingness, and charm.

Because we fail to understand this peaceful juxtaposition of talent and depravity, of superlative taste and refinements of villainy, this rivalry between the completest trained intellectuality and the perfect, we are apt to say: it cannot have been so; inwardly these people must have felt guilty and unhappy. What we ought to say, on the contrary, is: these people must positively have felt guiltless and happy, otherwise they could never have done these things. The naïveté of the Renaissance is at the root of its vices. On reading those descriptions of infamous deeds we are forced, in spite of our moral shudderings, to admire the grace and thoroughbred ease, the formal perfection, the rhythm, one might say, with which these people went about plotting, plundering, and murdering each other. Murder was then simply a part of the economy of existence, just as lying is now. Our press organization, our party organization, our political diplomacy, our business dealings — all these are built up on a comprehensive system of mutual lying, "getting away with it," and corruption. No one takes exception to this. If a politician, for reasons of State or in the interests of his party, poured cyanide of potassium into another man's cup of chocolate, the whole civilized world would be horrified; but we take it quite as a matter of course when a statesman from similar motives deceives, forges facts, dissembles, and intrigues. The Italians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries still lived in a state of mind which could regard an occasional murder as a ferment in the social metabolism — one might almost say, could accept it as a part of the social code; just as today "corruption" is considered an indispensable ingredient of public and private intercourse. It is only a question of grades.

The "guilt" of the Renaissance

At the same time it is permissible to speak of a certain kind of Renaissance "guilt." But it lies much deeper than all this.

The men of the Renaissance were bent on turning their whole life into one great dance festival, and they succeeded — brilliantly. The saying of Lorenzo de' Medici: "*Facciamo festa tuttavia!*"

floated above them like a blazing motto, and when Leo X became Pope he exclaimed: "*Godiamoci il papato, poichè Dio ce l'ha dato* (Let us have a merry Papacy, since God has given it to us)." This frivolity was not personal to him; he was only expressing the universal attitude towards a pope's rights and duties. A passionate greed for pleasure — though a pleasure ennobled by art and intellect — consumed the people of that age; an insatiable hunger for beauty, beauty in everything: beautiful sayings and writings, beautiful deeds and misdeeds, beautiful entries and exits, beautiful thoughts and passions, beautiful lies and scandals — for beauty as the material of life, making not only individual details, such as houses, statues, banquets, poems, but all existence a work of art. But — any wiser or more inward relation with the secrets of creation they neither desired nor attempted.

In his book *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist,* which is full of new points of view, Friedrich Gundolf writes: "Here a worldly nobility takes all things, lightly or hardly, according to a worldly standard and does not ask: What does God say to it?" Whether this fully applies to Shakspere or not is an open question; but it does apply exactly to Renaissance Italians. The question: "What does God say to it?" — the most profound and indeed the only problem of the Middle Ages — had never any interest for them. And yet were we really deposited in the world merely as clowns and jesters, upholsterers and amusement caterers?

Beauty or goodness

We touch here upon a great rift, perhaps the greatest of all rifts in the existence of the earth's inhabitants. It consists in the terrifically solvent question: What is the meaning of life — beauty or goodness? It is in the nature of these two forces that they usually find themselves in conflict with each other. Beauty desires itself, always and only itself; goodness never desires itself and always has its aim in the non-ego. Beauty is form, and only form; goodness is content, and only content. Beauty appeals to the senses, goodness to the soul. Is it mankind's most blissful and noble task to make the world constantly richer, more desirable and precious, to fill it with an ever greater fascination of wit and brilliance? Or is it not rather best, most natural and God-pleasing simply to be a good creature, take others by the hand and serve them and be of use to them? What is the aim of this our earthly pilgrimage?

Is it the unlimited affirmation of this world's power and beauty? But that can only be done at the cost of our purity. Or is it the saving of the soul entrusted to us by God, its purification and liberation from the earthly? But then we should not perhaps have lived life in full. Who, then, is right? Artist or saint? Creator or conqueror?

This conflict is displayed in the life of Tolstoi, that mighty dreamer and creator, who suddenly conceived an ardent hatred for art and became a peasant and a hermit. Its dark traces are visible in Shakspere's last works; its anxious voice is heard in Ibsen as he grows old, and rings stridently, like the beats of a brass gong, through the whole of Strindberg. Bernard Shaw, the strongest and warmest brain of our own times, tries to formulate it in *The Doctor's Dilemma,* one of his finest, richest, and most outspoken comedies, and Oscar Wilde puts it before us with overwhelming plastic effect in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Dorian Gray is a man for whom the dream of eternal beauty is fulfilled. No wickedness, no age, no filth can touch his body; but the body is only the shadow of the soul, and the soul can only be beautiful through purity and goodness, and so Dorian Gray is nothing but a deceived deceiver: the world sees him in his incorruptible youth and charm, but the invisible picture in the locked attic records none the less, trait by trait, every step which his soul has taken towards ugliness.

The second Fall of man

The Renaissance was the second and true Fall of man, as the Reformation was his second and perhaps definitive exclusion from paradise. The Reformation engendered the dogma of the *sacredness of work;* the Rennaissance produced the man *who enjoys,* and ends by worshipping, *himself.* And the two together, working with a good conscience and a narcissist self-regarding and self-glorification, are responsible for the modern boredom under which the earth is gradually congealing. And the correlative of this boredom is the "interestingness" (or otherwise) of objects — a conception as unknown to the Classical as to the mediæval age.

Dante's divine poem hangs like a blazing danger-signal at the entrance to the Renaissance. In describing the fate of those who were condemned to live at the greatest distance from God, he was describing the future of his own country. Held in the eternal ice, where even tears freeze, the last mercy is denied them: they cannot even repent. And as Dante strides through their ranks, he stumbles against Alberigo, who suffered the most terrible fate of all. The Creator had taken his soul from him.

The fate of the Renaissance was the fate of Alberigo. It was condemned to have no soul.

CHAPTER V

REASON TAKES CHARGE

> *"Man is therefore nothing but a heap of errors, powerless without grace. Nothing shows him truth, everything deceives. The two chief supports of truth, the reason and the senses, each deceive the other.*
>
> *Pascal*

World-history as a dramatic problem

We will pause for a moment to cast a brief glance over what has been said, to indicate what is to come and elucidate somewhat the purpose and content of our method.

World-history is a *dramatic* problem: it is nothing but the destiny of the collective soul of humanity, pursuing a path that is varied and full of confusion and change, but yet runs on in accord with definite psychological laws. The individual stages — the epochs, as we call them — follow not merely after one another, but arise one out of the other, and their passage has a scenic continuity: each one is definitely marked off from the preceding and the following, but yet forms with them an organic continuity, for it fulfils the earlier and conditions the latter. The drama of human history is dominated by a clear and ineluctable necessity; but, not being a lifeless work of the study but a poem conceived by a hand of genius, this necessity is not a rigid, barren piece of logic, nor a calculated piece of psychological schematism. Only distance enables us to get an inkling of it, for its throne is in the background and it works only mediately through a luxuriant chaotic jungle of life, never actually entering the consciousness of the actors, but (only later) laid bare and described in feeble and disillusioned words by the historian, whose rôle is that of the dramatic critic.

The drama of the modern age

What we are trying in these pages to investigate is the course of the development of the European soul during that period which we call the " modern age." So far we have tried to depict briefly the condition of " traumatic neurosis " which was the immediate consequence of the great trauma of the Black Death; the plague itself in its turn being only the external expression of an inner disturbance and psychological transformation — namely, the dethronement of the mediæval world-view by Nominalism, the definite, though generally unconscious, rejection of all earlier dominants of existence. There is a sudden collapse of all the standards and "truths" — religious, ethical, philosophical, economical, erotic, and artistic — which, till then firmly established and believed, had guaranteed, seemingly for ever, the orientation of man in past, present, and future. And amidst the ruins everyone, according to his peculiar characteristics, sought to carry off among his booty some last piece of still doubtful value, or in dull stupefaction renounced all the goods of this world, or, tossed between passion and pleasure, had eyes only for the enjoyment of the moment; but not one was able to find a way out. On the other hand, we have seen how in the fifteenth century in Italy there began to emerge what we have called the "psychomotor superstructure" — that is, the regulation, balancing, and organization of what had so far been just a neurosis. The labile becomes stable, the pathological condition becomes normally physiological, while the positive quality of the new spiritual condition gradually emerges, and indications of the directions become visible. Thus, what had had the appearance of a devastating and even fatal disease had, after all, been a healthful fever through which the organism was renewed, a pregnancy in which new germs were maturing in preparation for exposure to the light of day. This process of consolidation is already reaching its height in the early Cinquecento in Italy, and in the course of the century it affects the whole western half of Europe.

The new look

And this new quality, which passed gradually into the European consciousness, consisted simply in the rise of an extreme, exclusive, and all-embracing *Rationalism* — Sensualism, if the term is preferred, for fundamentally both are the same. The sensualist has faith only in what his senses tell him, but the counsellor of his faith is his reason. The rationalist builds only by the light of his reason, yet it is only sense-impressions which give him his basis. Each is a somewhat modified and differently orientated expression of the same position, the unconditional reliance of man on himself and his auxiliaries in nature.

This attitude to reality, however self-evident it appeared to a later age, was till then wholly unprecedented in the history of the

Christian group of nations; only the Greeks and Romans had had anything like it; indeed, this extreme sharpness of delineation was, so far as our knowledge of past history goes, something utterly new, for even the Classical attitude was only a rationalized mysticism, which never wholly transcended its oriental origin.

The turn of the fifteenth century, then, saw a remarkable achievement, when man, till then surrendered in unthinking reverent servitude to the secrets of God, eternity, and his own soul, opened his eyes and looked round. His glance no longer goes *upwards* to be lost in the sacred mysteries of Heaven; no longer *downwards* to start back before the fiery horrors of Hell; no longer *inwards* to delve into the questions of his uncertain origin and still more uncertain future; but *forwards*, traversing the earth, which he knows to be his. The earth is his and he finds pleasure therein — for the first time since the happy days of Greece.

This outlook is queerly profound in its superficiality. It is the outlook of an untragic contentment, a Philistine complacency, practical shrewdness, unpuzzled common sense, a sort of mixture of the view of a Yankee and a ruminant: the world is fair and green and full of sap, smelling delicious and tasting better still. Drink in as much of it as you can, for God, the special patron of all ruminants, undoubtedly gave it to you for that purpose.

Still the world is more than a tasty plot of grass: it is a building-site for building everything conceivable that is useful, beneficial, and serviceable: laboratories of medicine, physics, and chemistry; institutes and devices for the refinement, raising, and relief of existence, for Towers of Babel that rise to heaven and tear its secrets from it. It is a field of operations, inconceivably wide and inexhaustibly rich, for the realization and intensification of the power of pure reason, the reason that takes its stand wholly upon itself, all-confident, unfrightened, undeluded. This is the *heroic* side of the new attitude as opposed to its animal side.

The curve from 1500 to 1900

In short, man discovered for the first time for many ages that he had reason and that reason is all-powerful. He discovered himself as a thinking being, an "*ens rationale*," or rather, he regenerated these forces in himself; that, if we will, is the meaning of the "Renaissance." Reason, thus awakening, begins to penetrate everything: heaven and earth, water and light, the infinitely great and the infinitely small, the relations of men among themselves and their relation to God and the hereafter, the sway of nature and the laws of art. What wonder, then, that it thinks itself alone upon the world? The whole history of the modern age is nothing more than the increasing intensification and super-intensification of this strict and unidirectional evolutionary rationalism. The occasional set-backs are only superficial.

From 1500 to 1900 the European spirit describes a magnificent curve, exhausting in systematic progression almost every intellectual possibility. In the sixteenth century, it attained in Italy that extreme rationalization of art which we have already dealt with, and in the North the rationalization of faith known by the name of the Reformation. In the Counter-Reformation and Baroque movements there seems at first sight a will to return to irrationalism and mysticism, but that is a mere optical delusion. For Jesuitism is a creation of supreme logic and intellectual vigour, and what does the Baroque signify if not the dominance of a systematizing, calculating, and analytical logic — since it is its very effort to deny this dominance that drives it to take refuge in a thousand grotesque masks and artificial disguises, rationalism in fact drinking itself into intoxication so as to escape the prosaic tediousness of a culture of undiluted common sense. The eighteenth century brings with it the undisputed triumph of pure reason in all departments, the century of Voltaire and Kant, of Racine and Winckelmann. This quality of extremism would, one would think, be unsurpassable, yet surpassed it was by the " young Germany " and associated movements in other countries, which successfully transmuted art, religion, science, and the whole of life into pure political theory, thereby robbing it of its last irrational features. Entwined with it is the counter-thread of Romanticism, which, like Baroque, though far more impotent, is only a revolt against intellectualism, undertaken with purely intellectual weapons; a literary *Putsch* against literature, completely academic, doctrinaire, programmatic, a clever *aperçu,* of which the origins lie in a taste for paradox, for polemics, and for novelty in fashions. And then the second half of the nineteenth century brings the victory of the " scientific outlook " of technology, and development in the sense of the Marxian " negation of negations " ends in suicide and the catastrophe — as inevitable as it was meaningless — of the World War.

In itself, however, that war was both the finale of a closing age and the prelude to a new. As has been pointed out, it is to be regarded as one of those traumas which herald the birth of a new historical species. It signifies at once a world-downfall and a crisis, or, more exactly, the end of that long unbroken Crisis of the European soul which we call the modern age. We stand at the beginning of a new epoch, and for that reason it is possible to write modern history as a backward glance over a completed period of development. For the first time for nearly half a millennium man is becoming displeased with the world, doubtful as to whether he possesses it, doubtful of the reason and the senses by which he has possessed it hitherto. These are signs, if still distant today, and possibilities, beginning to glimmer palely on the horizon, that prelude a complete reversal of our world-outlook.

The mystical experience-world of the "Primitives"

We have grown so accustomed to the usurped supremacy of the logical functions that any other attitude of mind strikes us as absurd or lower than our own. But this is an entirely gratuitous assumption, for, on the contrary, it is *our* method of grasping the world intellectually that is the great exception, the abnormal, and the unnatural. An instructive instance in this respect is the work, published in 1910, by the French scientist Lévy-Bruhl: *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures,* which on the basis of most comprehensive and conscientious observations undertakes to give us a psychology of the so-called "primitive peoples." Such peoples, it is maintained, give to every thing and every being, to every tree, animal, man, picture, implement, a visible and an invisible existence, of which the latter is the more important; dream experiences, moreover, are regarded as real — indeed, as more real than waking. "What is for us perception is for the natural man more than anything a communion with spirits and souls, with the invisible and intangible secret forces which surround him on all sides, determining his fate and occupying in his consciousness a greater place than the tangible and visible materials of his ideas. Accordingly, there is no reason to ascribe to the dream a lower place as being a suspiciously subjective imagining; on the contrary, the dream is a privileged form of perception, because in it the part of material elements is reduced to a minimum, and therefore communion with the invisible powers is the most immediate and most complete." "Hence also the respect and reverence given to visionaries, seers, prophets, sometimes even to lunatics, to whom are ascribed special capacities of communicating with the invisible reality." "For us the surest proof of objectivity of a perception is the fact that under given identical conditions all observers will receive it at the same time and in the same manner. But, for the primitive man, it is a constant experience that beings or objects manifest themselves to certain individuals to the exclusion of all others present. There is no cause for surprise, for it strikes everyone as natural." "Primitive man does not need experiential evidence to convince himself of the invisible qualities of things, and therefore he is wholly unmoved by the contradictions which experience offers to these ideas. For this experience restricted to the visible, tangible, concrete in reality leaves unobserved just the most important things; the secret powers and spirits evade it." In fact, primitive man lives in a world which is not perceptible, but is yet real; a *mystical* world. "When a doctor accomplishes a cure, it is the spirit of the remedy which works on the spirit of the illness, and the physical action is unintelligible without the mystical. Or, rather, there are in reality no physical actions, there are only mystical acts."

Pre-logical or super-logical?

The distinguished author of the work is unfortunately a modern savant who carries on his observations of primitive peoples from a superior height and sees in the mind-forms of these societies only immature forerunners of his own kind of thought; and so he calls the intellectual attitude (though, as he admits, for lack of a better name) "pre-logical," emphasizing at the same time that it is neither antilogical nor alogical. "By the term 'pre-logical' I only mean to imply that there is no compulsion as there is with us to avoid contradictions. This kind of thinking does not, indeed, take any pleasure in wilful contradictions — if it did, it would be to us simply absurd — but it makes no effort to eradicate them." Nevertheless the word is misleading, since it gives the impression that we have before us a sort of preliminary or experimental stage of logical thinking, which is destined to be overcome by the kind of thinking dominant among us. It would be far more justifiable to talk of a "super-logical" thought, for in fact this way of perceiving the world is not by any means limited to primitive peoples; they merely employ these ideas more easily and naturally because they themselves are nearer to nature. Probably there never has been a culture-people among whom the seer and visionary have not held a similarly privileged position; even the Greeks, who can hardly be classed among the primitives, saw man in a double aspect: in his perceptible appearance and in his invisible double, the psyche, which was only liberated after death; and the Greeks considered dream-figures also as realities with genuine validity. Moreover, the pre-logical form of thinking is the hall-mark of all creative activity: all art, all religion, all true philosophy, even all true science; for life in itself is "pre-logical." All nature is miraculous, and every penetrating explanation of a fact of experience is nothing but the enunciation of some miracle. The philologist is occupied with the wonder of language, the botanist with the wonder of plants, the historian with the wonder of the world's course: all of them secrets which no one has yet succeeded in deciphering. Even the physicist, if he is a man of genius, continually finds himself face to face with some new wonder. The deeper a science has proved itself capable of penetrating into the domains of the miraculous, the more scientific it is. The fact that miracles no longer occur does not prove that we are cleverer, but that we have lost some vital quality, that our imagination and instinct are weakened, that we have become spiritually emptier — in a word, that we are stupider. Miracles have ceased to happen because we live, not in so advanced and enlightened, but in so degraded and God-forsaken an age.

The rationalist intermezzo

Rationalism, the will-o'-the-wisp, which arbitrarily illumines and validates only those sections of reality which do not contradict "experience" and the "laws of thought" (that is, raw sense-impressions with a defective logic fitted on to them), is nothing more than a temporary *prejudice,* destined to disappear after a definite period of supremacy. It is undeniable that rationalism is not the one and only prejudice, but only one of the many which humanity has to pass through in the course of its history; but the assumption that it is a better prejudice than the rest, or the only sensible one, or, still more, that it is no prejudice at all, is a local obsession of modern Europe.

What I shall try to present, therefore, is the story of a brief interlude of the supremacy of reason between two irrationalisms of the Middle Ages and of the future, with no more significance in the whole structure of human history than a passing fashion or an interesting fad, a curiosity of cultural history. It is more than probable, even, that the mankind of the future — possessed of an exact astrology and seership, of accurate and uninterrupted contact with higher spirits, of a science of the soul compared to which our present psychology will be as the twice-times table compared to the infinitesimal calculus, and of a hundred other faculties which we cannot even imagine — will see in our modern age with its " achievements " an epoch of the most befogged, barren, and *limited* superstition that has hitherto been known. Nay, peoples of the past — the Egyptians with their splendid art which we cannot grasp ; the Chinese with their, for us, unattainable maturity of social wisdom ; the Babylonians with their irrecoverable science of astrology and destiny-calculation ; the Indians with the unfathomable depths of their religion — would probably feel only an indulgent sympathy for those analogous activities of our time, though to our liberal self-conceit they may appear as the crowning achievements of progress. They would have felt about us what Herodotus' Memphite priests felt about the Greeks, that we have remained eternal children. And a more sensitive ear than our own might perceive, as a sort of undertone to the whole of modern European history, a subtle ironic accompaniment to all our songs of progress, the silent laughter of the East.

Thus the European rationalism which we have to depict was but a transitory *idée fixe* of a small peninsula of Asia, one of the most rudimentary, childish, and primitive periods in the history of the human spirit, and what we boast of under the name of the modern age is in reality the history of a grey *antiquity*, a sort of childhood of humanity, a primitive period of prehistory.

The three black arts

This modern age, at least according to what is taught in all the schools, was caused by the discovery of America. Actually it was just the reverse, for it cannot be too often repeated that a generation such as lived at that time, with its new passion for adventure, its urge into the distances, its reawakened realism and unquenchable thirst for knowledge, was bound, by the same compelling necessity as lay behind its other discoveries and inventions, to reach the West Indies one fine day. A picture or a lyric poem is the organic product of a period — even the academic mind by now realizes that much — and it is the same with its technical achievements. There are no " chance " inventions; for instance, it is not true that the late nineteenth century owed its extraordinarily accelerated tempo of life to the telephone, the telegraph, express trains, and the like — it was the new tempo that was primary, and the new feeling of space and time was an inborn attribute of the generation which made magnetism, electricity, and steam-power useful. It *had* to create these life-forms.

Moreover, the discovery of America was not even the most important of the events which introduced the new age — quite apart from the fact that that generation did not in any real sense discover America, for it merely landed, not to say stranded, there — and for the psychological constitution of an age only *conscious* achievements enter into account. The decisive metamorphosis was rather the result of three other facts: the generalized use of the gunpowder invented by Berthold Schwarz, the use of movable letter type for the mass production of books, and the passionate interest in the secrets of alchemy. These three " black " arts significantly heralded the modern age.

And besides these well-known phenomena the last third of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth produced a series of other remarkable advances of knowledge and technics. In 1471 the first astronomical observatory was built, in 1490 Martin Behaim constructed the first globe, in 1493 Hartman Schedels *Liber chronicarum* — an epoch-making work on geography and history — was published with more than two thousand woodcuts. The year 1505 saw the first postal service, 1506 the issue by Reuchlin of his Hebrew grammar; in 1510 Peter Hale conceived his spring-driven watch, the famous " Nürnberg egg," which could be carried in the pocket; in 1515 wheel-lock fire-arms came into use. There are indications, too, of the modern conception of time: public clocks began to strike the quarters. The later years of the century, too, breathed an energetic intellectual life, for Servetus discovered the pulmonary circulation in 1540, and three years later — the date of the publication of the Copernican system — the great anatomist Vesalius issued his fundamental work *De humani corporis fabrica,* Christopher Rudolff wrote the first algebraic treatise in German, Adam Riese the first text-books of practical arithmetic, George Agricola laid the foundations of mineralogy, and Konrad Gesner of scientific zoölogy, while

Gerhard Kremer, cosmographer and etcher (celebrated under his Latin name of Mercator), rediscovered Ptolemy's discovery of how to project the grid of meridians and parallels on to a conical envelope, and not only so, but improved it so much that "Mercator's projection" is in use to this day.

Paracelsus

But the fact that, when all is said and done, the period is still transitional between the Middle Ages and Rationalism is evident from the numerous mystics, cabalists, and thaumaturges who really set the tone of the intellectual aspirations of the age. All these have the aspect of a new zoölogical species which carries about with it the survival of an earlier form from which it sprung: in the same way, for instance, that creatures who have completed the transition from a water to a land existence may still have swimming-bladders, and the double breathing-mechanism of gills and lungs. The most popular of these figures were Agrippa von Nettesheim and Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim. Von Nettesheim published in 1510 under the title *De occulta philosophia* a sort of text-book of magic, which he divided up into natural, heavenly, and religious: the first telling us how to gain mastery over the earth forces, the second how to penetrate the secrets of the heavens, the third how to obtain power over the dæmons. Paracelsus is one of the most original figures of the whole age, humanist and physicist, alchemist and astrologer, chiromancer and necromancer, chirurge and theurge, discoverer of hydrogen and rediscoverer of scientific medicine. In his incessant wanderings as doctor, teacher, and alchemist he was courted by the whole world and surrounded by a noisy following, in which genuine disciples of science mingled indiscriminately with adventurers and beggars who hunted for the Philosophers' Stone — indeed it is very difficult at that period to distinguish between vulgar thirst for gold and noble thirst for knowledge. On all sides he accomplished sensational cures, gathered and disseminated knowledge, and aroused such scandal and admiration that in the end he fell a victim to a villainous plot concocted by some of his graduate colleagues who saw in his genius a danger to their own business. Later generations have seen in him, on the one hand, a typical charlatan, the low and contemptible quack of the fairs, and, on the other, the typical seer, martyr of science, and benefactor of humanity; and both views are right.

His own works themselves disclose this double character. Bombastic and artificial, portentous and prolix, obscure and overladen, they fully justify his name of Bombastus; yet he also honoured the name of Theophrastus, for he was a sincere messenger from heaven, an apostle of deep learning and pure wisdom. Again and again he emphasizes that it is not in books but in the Book of Nature that wisdom is to be found: that what we may find in the works of Galen is like some fungoid growth on a tree and that only a fool could confuse the fungus and the tree. Briefly, he taught a *pantheistic medicine* — everything is interdependent, and the duty of the doctor is to unravel this interdependence, for the world, too, is one great organism, with life and disturbances of life, with its own look and its own disease, respiration, pulse, fever, and convalescence.

The Philosophers' Stone was an article of faith with him; for he knew nothing, poor man, of the law of the conservation of the elements, and yet — has not this very law been lately upset by radium, which, as everyone knows, can turn itself into another element, helium? Thus does what was once a pillar of science become "unscientific"; thus does what was crude superstition become "scientific." Such is the history of the so-called sciences, and the consideration of it should lessen the conceit of learned pedants, if they were at all capable of allowing healthy human reason to operate without bias.

Furthermore, alchemy was by no means only concerned with the making of gold, for the secret substance, the arcanum which was the object of its search, was to be a panacea for all ills, like the theriaca of antiquity. In fact, the general view of the time was that there must be some universal formula which would at a single stroke reveal the secret of the world, a master-key which was to open the door of all riddles: that is the real significance of the Philosophers' Stone.

Cannon-fodder and movable types

The two other "tendencies of the period," gunpowder and printing, undoubtedly had a far more pernicious influence than alchemy. The use of fire-arms brought into warfare an influence hitherto unknown which made of it something vulgar, barbarous, and mechanical, and gunpowder took from courage its select, aristocratic, and individual quality. Knightly mounted combat, man against man, with specialized defensive and offensive equipment, which required a particular aptitude, or at least a training and practice lasting for years and even generations, produced a definite class, even a race, to whom courage was a sort of calling. The definitive introduction of fire- and infantry-tactics put an end to war as the business of a particular kind of individual, temperament, and capacity; and courage, in becoming common, vanished as a characteristic. Weapons were no longer an organic part of the man, like the limbs of his body, but man was an impersonal function of his weapons, a cog in the great military machine. Hence a twofold result: first, an enormously increased unscrupulousness and brutality in warfare, since each man had become an easily replaceable particle of the whole, a mass-production piece, as it were; and second, the extension of military duty to far larger sections of the population and finally to the whole. The idea of "man-power" was only created by the invention of gunpowder, and so, too, universal compulsory service; for we cannot make a thing a duty unless it is within the possibilities of everyone. Thus the history of the modern age is the history of the progressive disruption of the conception of war in its original meaning and significance. The last step, World War, exhibits the last phase of this dissolution — the war fought for business reasons.

The printing-press — which, incidentally, would never have had so universal an importance if it had not synchronized with the invention of cheap and good paper — has a similar levelling and mechanizing effect. Gutenberg, or whoever it may have been, broke up the wood-blocks through which first pictures, then signatures, and finally even books had been produced, into the constituent letters. Here, indeed, one's first thought is, we have an achievement of individualism, a liberation from the restrictions, the associate and corporate life, of the Middle Ages. The elements — cells, as it were — which build up the organism of the word, the sentence, and the thought, become independent and free, each a life in itself capable of infinite combinations. Everything had hitherto been a rigid datum, static and conventional; henceforward all is fluid, variable, dynamic, and individual. *Movable type* is the symbol of Humanism. But the reverse of the picture is that everything is mechanized, becoming mechanized, controllable, uniform, and of equated value. Every letter is a unit with equal rights in the organism of the book, but it is at the same time something impersonal, serving, and technical, an atom among atoms. There are similar products of the new spirit in other departments. We have just spoken of warfare, in which each knight had been a battle in himself, but the soldier is merely an anonymous unit. In the same way the citizen is replaced by the *subject,* the artisan by the *workman,* goods by *gold;* and all four, soldier, subject, workman, and money, have the common quality that they are equal magnitudes, mere quantities which can be added, shifted, and exchanged at will; their value depends not so much on their personal properties as on their number. We see the same, too, as regards personal comfort and the whole outward conduct of life. The man of the modern age has more practical furniture, quicker transport, better methods of heating and illumination, more comfortable houses, better centres of education, than had mediæval man, and we are assured by these (and countless other) means of a freer, less burdened, and more individual existence. But these furnishings, these methods of transport, and the like completely equate one another. The truth is that in history as in nature we have to pay for everything: we acquire *individuality* and lose *personality.*

Copernicus

Such were the decisive transformations in the world-view, and to them was now added the astronomical reinterpretation which began with Copernicus. The treatise *De revolutionibus orbium cœlistium, libri VI,* which contained his new analysis of the cosmic system, was only published in the year of his death; and, even so, it contained an introduction by the Protestant theologian Osiander, who arbitrarily declared the whole thing to be merely a hypothesis — obviously because Luther and Melanchthon had expressed themselves adversely: " The fool is trying to overthrow the whole art of astronomy," said Luther; " but the Bible tells us that Joshua made the sun and not the earth stand still." In fact the work had been written far earlier — as Copernicus himself said, in his dedication (which, paradoxically, was addressed to Pope Paul III), it had been lying four times nine years in his study — and it must have long been available to the public through secret channels. As soon as a piece of knowledge is actually *there,* it is irrepressible; it infects the whole atmosphere and spreads like a bacillus.

The discovery, for that matter, was not wholly new. Two hundred and fifty years before Christ a similar system had been worked out by Aristarchus of Samos — the sun and stars unmoving, the earth rotating round itself and round the sun — and Plutarch says even of Plato that he had " not left the earth in the centre of the cosmos, but had assigned this place to a better star." The Greek, however, wanted to regard the world as a limited, closed circle, with himself as observer in the centre; he wanted a " cosmos," a beautiful, artistically organized whole, easy to imagine and comfortably synoptic, like a temple, a statue, or a city-state: the heliocentric idea failed to correspond to his view of the world and was, therefore, *false*. In the time of Copernicus man was beginning to feel the passion for distances, at the same time as the passion for order, similarity, and regularity, and thus wanted a universe that could be expressed in formulæ, one that spoke, as it were, the language of mathematics. The new astronomy, that seemed to reduce man to nothingness, made him in reality the unveiler, the seer, and even the legislator of the cosmos. A world — however terrible in its infinity, however vast in relation to an earth that swam in it like a faintly lighted bubble — that he could *calculate* and subject to his intellect, he preferred to one which was well rounded, but veiled in darkness and secrecy and subject to an impenetrable destiny. It is one of the greatest falsifications of history to harp again and again on the idea that the heliocentric system made man more modest and humble, for the contrary is the truth.

In any case, what Copernicus taught was a universe that was heliocentric indeed and, therefore, immeasurably vaster than Ptolemy's, but was certainly not infinite; for it had not only a fixed sun enthroned at its centre, but a fixed outermost shell (the " eighth sphere ") beyond which nothing else existed. His world was thus still essentially different from ours, not only smaller, but simpler, more stable, more solid, more synoptic, than our universe of countless solar systems that, disparate by infinite distances, rush with colossal speed through an abyss of which all we can say is that it never comes to an end.

The conquest of " Cape Non "

The really symbolic instrument, however, of the rising age was not the astronomical chart, not even the printing-press or the retort or the cannon, but the *compass*. Discovered long ago, it was only now that it began to be trusted. As we have stressed many times, the essence of the new attitude is an irresistible and unprecedented impulse into distance, an insatiable urge to unveil, to pierce, and to explore everything: and hence it is called "the Age of the Discoveries." The discoveries, however, were not themselves the essential; what was decisive was the *tendency* to discover, the noble quest for its own sake — this was the dæmonic emotion which inspired the minds of the age. Travelling, which had hitherto been regarded as a necessary evil, becomes the supreme pleasure. Everywhere there is a wandering, restless movement of students, artisans, soldiers, artists, merchants, scholars, preachers; in fact, certain occupations — for example, that of the Humanist or the doctor — were pursued almost entirely on the move. A man's value was measured by the extent of his travels, and in almost all occupations this constituted a superior qualification, the mark of a sort of aristocracy. The men of that age experienced life by *faring,* in the literal sense of the word, through it, and it was inevitable that this new and colossal energy of mobility should soon take possession of the water-ways too.

At the head of the modern discoveries stands the figure of the Infante Henry of Portugal, who, though he never went on a voyage, himself earned, by the magnificent energy with which he backed all maritime efforts, the name of Henry the Navigator. His lips never touched a wineglass or a woman; his one passion was the opening up of the African coasts. Until his day the furthest limit passable for ships had been assumed to be Cape Bojador, beyond which further progress was reputed to be impossible, because the sea was so dense with salt that the prow could not cleave it — hence its name, "Cape Non." The general opinion backed the view, first expressed by Aristotle and confirmed by Ptolemy, that in the tropics there could only be desert, since the heat of the sun's rays falling vertically would tolerate no vegetation. But, in spite of all, Henry instigated the dispatch of a squadron, and in 1445 one of his subjects could tell him that he had discovered more southerly coasts with lush vegetation and vast tracts of palm: "All this," he ironically commented, "I write with permission of his grace Master Ptolemy, who uttered right good things concerning the divisions of the world, but was on this point much mistaken. Countless are the black peoples that dwell at the Equator, and vast the height to which trees rise there, for it is in the south, beyond all places, that the strength and fullness of vegetation increase." In the very same year was reached the fertile promontory which since then has borne the name of Cape Verde. A vigorous trade in the form of barter was rapidly developed, the chief exports being gold-dust, musk, and ivory: and rich sugar plantations were established on Madeira. Slave-getting was one of the business accompaniments of these first voyages of discovery, but the Infante himself had thoughts for nothing but their scientific value.

With his death in 1460, enterprise comes to a halt, and no important progress was made until the eighties. In 1482, on a voyage in which Martin Behaim is reputed to have had a share, the mouth of the Congo was discovered, and in 1486 Bartolomeo Díaz reached the southernmost point of Africa, which, by reason of the terrible storms that raged there, he called the Cabo Tormentoso, but which was rechristened Cabo da Bõa Esperança by King João II. Diaz even rounded the cape and was already making his way into the Indian Ocean when he was forced by his crew to return home. The hope expressed in the new name given by the King to the cape was that of reaching the East Indies by a southerly route, and it was soon fulfilled. Twelve years later Vasco da Gama reached Calicut, the capital city of the Indian kingdom of Malabar and at the same time the focus of traffic with the Moluccas, the "Spice Islands." From this dates the Portuguese supremacy in the European spice trade.

Columbus

Six years earlier, in the service of Spain, the Genoese Cristoforo Colombo — Cristóbal Colón, as he thenceforth called himself — had made the first move to the westward. He picked in the first instance the worst route to America — namely, the longest — and he would probably never have reached his goal if peculiarly favourable winds had not neutralized his mistake. His plan was to "reach the Orient by the westward route." Thus he was fully acquainted with the spherical form of the earth as it had been depicted in Martin Behaim's famous "Earth Apple," but he shared the error that that globe displays of treating Asia as one coherent mass which embraced the earth horseshoewise. It is not quite exact to say, as is usually said, that he hoped to reach the "West Indies" in this way, for what he expected — and perfectly rightly from his own point of view — to reach was Cathay

(China) or its outlying island of Zipangu (Japan). His expectation was supported by the work of the famous explorer Marco Polo, who had in actual fact, two hundred years previously, reached China and Japan, but eastwards by the land route. And indeed Columbus took Cuba, the first big island he touched at, to be Zipangu, and when, a little later, he discovered the neighbouring island of Haiti, which he called Española, he modified his view to the extent of calling Haiti Zipangu and making Cuba the Chinese mainland. He was so obsessed by the idea that he was on Asiatic soil that even for his last voyage he demanded Arabian interpreters for dealings with the Great Khan of Cathay and actually mistook a flock of flamingos, which he saw gravely stalking through the night, for white-robed Chinese priests. On his second voyage he had touched at Jamaica, on his third had reached the mouth of the Orinoco and the mainland, and on his last, Honduras, which he declared to be Farther India. Four years later, in 1506, he died, in the same year as Martin Behaim, and still with no idea that he had discovered a new continent.

It is therefore no crying injustice to him that the continent does not bear the name of Columbia; though there is still less excuse for naming it after Amerigo Vespucci. The discovery of America as an event was imminent. It was in the air and would have occurred without Columbus, nor would it even have been long delayed. "America would have been discovered" — in the words of the great naturalist Von Baer — "even if Columbus had died in his cradle." In 1497 the Venetian Giovanni Gabotto — John Cabot — sailing under the English flag, reached the coast of Labrador and thus touched the mainland a year before Columbus; in 1500 Pedro Cabral, driven in a westerly direction during a voyage to Calicut, discovered Brazil, and, with it (by such a chance) a much shorter route between Europe and America. Columbus, moreover, not only in a scientific sense, but from a practical point of view, could make nothing of his discovery. His government of the new provinces was pure terrorism and discovers only the ugly side of him — immoderate avarice, unscrupulous cruelty to the natives, dishonesty, and blind jealousy of his own countrymen. Every administrative arrangement which he instituted was equally inhuman and short-sighted, as, for instance, his callous decimation of the native population by slave-trading, their foolish exhaustion in plantation work, the transportation of Spanish criminals to Española, the introduction of wild dogs to hunt human beings. Avarice and greed exercised such power over him that in the end all his nobler impulses were smothered and all his more ideal qualities obscured: even his very entry into the New World was marred by his cheating the sailor who first sighted land of his promised reward. The only credit due to him is for the unwearying, unshakable patience and ability with which he prosecuted his schemes. Apart from that his work was the result of fantastic enthusiasm, greed, and egoism, and his whole voyage a chance shot in a lottery, which by a fluke achieved priority: a nautical record-breaking of minor sporting interest. Columbus was a hit-or-miss experimenter: he set out to try a definite direction and found America; he played about with an egg until it stood, and one success proves just as much as the other about his genius.

Round the globe in eleven hundred days

The greatest of the discovery-voyages of the age — even if there were no better reason for calling it so than the fact that it was carried through consciously — was the circumnavigation of the globe by Fernão Magalhães, a Portuguese who had entered the Spanish service. He left Spain in September 1519, sailed, to the accompaniment of mutinies and plots among his comrades, down the east coast of South America to the southernmost point of the mainland, passed through the extremely difficult and dangerous strait that is named after him, between the continent and the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, and reached the Pacific Ocean, which he then crossed in a north-westerly direction. After a four months' voyage of appalling difficulty and privations, during which the crews were finally driven to feeding on leather and rats, he reached the Ladrones and a few days later the Philippines, where in April 1521 he was killed in a (recklessly begun and imprudently managed) fight with the natives. His ship the *Vittoria* sailed on under the command of Sebastian d'Elcano to the Moluccas, whence it came through the Indian Ocean, via the Cape of Good Hope and the Cape Verde Islands, safely home to the same harbour from which it had set out nearly three years before. The voyagers had noticed on their arrival at the island of Santiago, in July 1522, that the local calendar indicated Thursday, July 10, while according to their own calculation it was only Wednesday, July 9, for, by sailing from west to east they had lost a day. If they had sailed in the opposite direction, they would have been in the same case as the hero of *Round the World in Eighty Days* who — everyone knows the delightful and unexpected point of the story — without knowing it gained a day and won his bet. And they were probably as astonished and delighted over their discovery as Mr. Phileas Fogg, for it provided absolutely irrefutable evidence of the spherical shape of the earth.

The crime of the Conquista

At about the same time Central America, and about ten years later the western coast of South America, were opened up to Europeans. Let us pause a little over these two achievements, the conquest of Mexico and Peru, for they are among the most shocking and senseless performances in the whole of history.

On his landing in Mexico in 1519 Hernando Cortez found there a highly developed and, indeed, over-developed culture, far superior to that of Europe; but, a white man and a Catholic, blinded by the double conceit of his religion and his race, he could not rise to the idea that beings of a different colour and a different world-view could be even his equals. It is tragic and grotesque to see with what arrogance the Spaniards, members of the most brutal, superstitious, and uncultured nation of their continent, looked down upon this culture, of the bases of which they had not the smallest inkling. Nevertheless, we cannot deny all greatness to the figure of Cortez; he may have been a *conquistador* like the rest of them, coarse, cunning, avaricious, untroubled by higher moral restraints, but he was not wanting in fertile courage, political shrewdness, and a sort of elementary decency. Nor did he ever act through mere love of bloodshed — he had, indeed, a sort of horror of it, and his abolition of the blood-sacrifice of the Aztecs was perhaps the only action that was worthy of civilized man in the whole course of the Spanish Conquista. His followers — with some few exceptions, notably among the clergy — were fellows of the lowest sort, rowdies and criminals ejected by their native land, down-and-out Spaniards, the scum of the scum of contemporary Europe. The sole motive for the expedition was a vulgar lust of gold: as Cortez remarked with a certain superior irony to the governor sent by Montezuma to meet him, "the Spaniards suffer from a heart-disease for which gold is a peculiarly suitable remedy."

The late culture of Mexico

The culture of Mexico is to be imagined as being more or less in the same stage as that of the Empire in Rome. It is evident that it had already reached the phase which Spengler calls " Civilization " and which is characterized by a life of huge cities, of refined comforts, of autocratic forms of government and expansionist imperialism, of massiveness in architecture and extravagance in ornament, of ethical fatalism and barbarized religion. The capital, Tenochtitlan, built on platforms in a wondrous lake, displayed huge temples and obelisks, extensive arsenals, hospitals, barracks, zoölogical and botanical gardens, barbers' shops, vapour-baths, and fountains, tapestries and paintings of gorgeous feather-mosaic, costly goldsmith's work and finely tooled plates of tortoise-shell, splendid woollen cloaks and leather gear, ceilings of fragrant carved wood, hot-plates, scent-sprayers, and hot-water systems. In the weekly markets, attended by hundreds of thousands, wares of every conceivable kind were exposed for sale. A wonderfully organized postal service, of fast couriers, plying on the network of well-built highways and ramps which traversed the land, carried every item of news with amazing speed and precision; police and fiscal arrangements worked with the greatest accuracy and reliability. The kitchens of the wealthy were fragrant with the most select foods and drinks, game, fish, waffles, preserves, delicate soups, spiced dishes; and withal a number of things unknown to the Old World, turkey, *chocolatl* — the favourite dish of the Mexicans, to them no drink, but a fine *crême*, eaten cold with vanilla and other spices — *pulque*, an intoxicating drink made from aloes (which also yielded a tasty artichoke-like vegetable and first-class sugar), and *yetl*, tobacco, smoked either mixed with liquidambar in gilded wooden pipes, or like a cigar in fine silver holders. The streets were so clean, a Spanish text tells us, that in passing along them one soiled one's feet no more than one's hands. The population was as honest as it was clean: all houses were left open, and when a dwelling was unoccupied, its owner merely set up a reed on the door-mat to indicate his absence, without fear of theft; in fact, the courts were almost never called upon to deal with cases of violating property. Writing was by means of a very elaborate picture-writing, and there were also lightning painters who could fix all occurrences with amazing rapidity in almost speaking designs. The mathematical sense of the Aztecs must have been highly developed, for their arithmetical system was built up on the difficult principle of raising to a power, the basic number being 20, the next 20^2 or 400, the next 20^3 or 8000, and so on; further, the Maya are supposed to have invented, independently of the Indians, the idea of zero, a fertile and complicated notion which only made its way into Europe slowly, viâ the Arabs.

The American cultures were probably part of that great girdle of cultures which embraced the whole inhabited earth in what are for us prehistoric times: extending from Egypt and Nearer Asia over India and China to Central America and presumably including the two pre-Classical European worlds of Etruria and the Ægean. Under the name of Pan-Babylonism the theory of this belt of cultures has evoked much opposition and found much support, and as a matter of fact the Aztecs do show considerable similarity to the Babylonians in their chronology, their picture-writing, and their star-worship, and moreover there is a whole series of things which remind us vividly of Egypt, such as the type of government, a mixture of God-kingship and priestly despotism, the bureaucracy whose chief administrative task was a pedantic guardianship of the masses, the carefully systematized and ceremonious etiquette of intercourse, the monstrosity and animal forms of their gods, the great gift for naturalistic portraiture, combined with a strong tendency towards stylization of the higher forms, the extravagant luxury and exuberant massiveness of their buildings.

Christian elements in Aztec religion

Most remarkable of all, however, are the parallels between the Mexican and Christian religions. The crown of the emperor, who was at the same time high priest, was of almost identical form with the papal tiara. The mythology knew the stories of Eve and the serpent, the Flood and the tower of Babel. In somewhat altered form they knew the sacraments of baptism, confession, and communion, and they had monks who spent their time in vigil, fasting, and scourging. The cross was a holy symbol and they had even a dim idea of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Their ethical commands sometimes show an almost verbal identity with the Bible. One of their doctrines ran: "Keep peace with all men, endure insults with patience, for God, who sees all, will avenge thee"; and another: "Whoso looks with too great intentness at a married woman commits adultery with his eyes."

This religion, like the contemporary Christianity, was stained by the institution of human sacrifice, in which captives played the rôle of heretics. They were led on fixed days to the temple, when a priest, specially appointed for the service, cut open the breast with a sharp knife of bone and tore out the still beating and smoking heart, to be cast upon the altar of the god. Quite naturally, this custom has revolted later generations and given rise to the idea that the Mexicans were after all only a race of savages, but there is much that may be said in their excuse. In the first place, the custom was restricted to the Aztecs — the Toltecs did not know the practice — and even among them it seemed that it was disappearing, for at least in Cholula, the second city of Mexico, there was a temple of the god Quetzalcoatl, in whose worship human sacrifice was replaced by a vegetable sacrifice. Moreover, there was no lust for blood or cruelty for its own sake, this being, even if a barbaric, yet a religious ceremony, through which the believer sought to win the favour of his god, and so little dishonouring that occasionally the pious offered themselves as willing victims. It was merely fear and superstition and was certainly not on a lower moral level than the Spanish *autos-da-fé,* of which the motive was fanaticism and vengeance, and undoubtedly higher than the gladiatorial games at Rome, where captives were killed as an enjoyment.

The white God

One of the most striking elements of the Mexican religion was the belief in the second coming of the god Quetzalcoatl, of whom it was believed that he had in ancient days ruled his people and taught them every useful art and instituted all existing social arrangements, and that he had finally sailed away in his magic boat with the promise to return some day. It happened that just at this time the priests had declared the moment of the god's return to be near; he was expected from the east and it was said that he would be distinguished from the Aztecs by his white skin, blue eyes, and fair beard. All these prophecies were to be fulfilled, and it was this touching faith, exploited in the most shameless way by the Spaniards, that largely enabled a runagate band of illiterate bandits not merely to subdue this world, but to trample it to pieces. There were other reasons: the deficient physical energy of the natives, whose existence seems to have become somewhat vegetative or plantlike through the enervating tropical climate and centuries of peace and luxury; the equipment of the Europeans with fire-arms, artillery, steel armour, and horses, all of them wholly unknown to the Mexicans and producing on them, in addition to the physical effects, an amazing moral impression; the higher level of Spanish tactics, which bore somewhat the same relation to the Aztec as the Macedonian had to the Persian; the inner disunion of the kingdom and the desertion of powerful tribes. The chief reason, however, may well have been that the Mexican culture had reached the period of its agony and was doomed, in some way or other, to collapse. We can follow the spectacle, throughout the whole of history, of older cultures giving place to the younger: the Sumerian to the Babylonian, the Babylonian to the Assyrian, Assyrian to Persian, Persian to Greek, Greek to Roman, and Roman to Germanic. But we observe, in all these cases, that the lower assimilates the higher; for instance, the Babylonians took over Sumerian cuneiform, Persians the Chaldean astrology, Rome Greek art and philosophy, the Germans the Roman Church. But in America nothing of the sort, for the Indian culture vanished without leaving a trace behind. This instance, unique in the whole of history, is, however, explicable by the also unique fact of a whole people being, not brought into subjection by another people (barbaric or otherwise), but ruined and killed off by an infamous band of robbers, and thus it came to pass that while long-vanished cultures like the Egyptian and Mesopotamian, not to mention the Greek or Roman, still exercise their fructifying influence, the shameful crime of the Conquista robbed humanity of a noble and unique world-view and made it, so to say, poorer by a sense.

Peru

The kindred culture of Peru stood perhaps still higher than the Aztec — though they seem to have known nothing of each other, there is great resemblance between the two peoples. The whole land was covered with miracles of engineering. Countless canals, aqueducts, and terraceworks brought it to the extreme of fertility, and the utmost care was spent in cultivating it, vertically no less than horizontally. Even above the clouds there were orchards. High-roads which overcame every obstacle threaded the whole district, now making use of hewn steps and now of levelled ravines, now passing through long tunnels and now over ingenious bridges. Peru taught the whole of Europe the principles of manuring — the introduction of guano, has revolutionized our agriculture. Incomparable, too, was its textile art, which incidentally (by means of a complicated system of knotting that is still undeciphered) served also as writing. They were masters of carving, and they had a regular drama. Their government was a sort of communism with an aristocratic superstructure and a theocratic apex, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that our own continent has never produced a form of government of like wisdom, justice, and benevolence. In their splendid irrigation system, in their religion, which honoured the sun as the highest god and the moon as his sister-wife, and in their mummy cult they remind us even more startlingly of the Egyptians than do the Aztecs.

The conquest of Peru is a more revolting story even than that of Mexico, a chain of the most infamous acts of treachery and bestiality. The name of the rascal Francisco Pizarro, who was not for nothing suckled by a sow, deserves to survive in the memory of posterity as the proverbial instance of treacherous meanness, shameless avarice, and bestial coarseness, as the basest term of abuse which one man can fling at another. The story of his "conquest" is briefly as follows. He arranged an interview with Atahuallpa, the Peruvian Emperor, to which the latter came with a large but unarmed escort; during the conversation Pizarro suddenly gave a sign, at which the soldiers pressed forward, cut down the whole of the imperial suite, and took Atahuallpa prisoner. He, like Montezuma, a man of such delicacy, gentleness, and nobility as was inconceivable in contemporary Europe, was at first thunderstruck by this foul deed, which would have been scorned by any moderately decent brigand captain; but, soon collecting himself, he so far maintained his calm and dignity that in his conversation with the Spanish rabble he even condescended to jesting remarks. Realizing very soon that the invaders were chiefly concerned with his treasures, he promised them as ransom a whole room filled with gold to the height of a man standing with arm upstretched. Pizarro agreed and carried off a colossal booty, such as had never been gathered in one heap in his native land. Then, once he had the gold, he caused the Inca to be strangled, on charges so trumped up, so ridiculous in their brutal stupidity, that some even of his own bandits protested. Such was the achievement of Christians in the year 1533, exactly fifteen hundred years after the crucifixion of their Saviour.

America's return gift

Pizarro ended his career like most murderers, being killed by one of his own boon companions. And all Spain had loss and not profit by his deeds of shame, for it fell more and more a victim to the enervating and stupefying habit of living on stolen goods, so that within a bare hundred years it lay as it has lain ever since, a soulless, mortifying corpse, gloomy, sullen, self-consuming, a victim of its own dullness of intellect, its own appalling barrenness of heart, its own fierce brutality. The rest of Europe, too, has fallen to the divine nemesis, for from the New World it imported not only maize and tobacco, tomatoes and bananas, cocoa and potatoes, vanilla and cochineal, but— *gold* and *syphilis.*

The penalty of lust, the "venerie," rapidly became the fashionable disease. Almost all the outstanding figures of the age, according to contemporary evidence, were syphilitics — Alexander and Cæsar Borgia, Julius II and Leo X, Celtes and Hutten, Charles V and Francis I, the last of whom, indeed, acquired the disease quite romantically, for, according to Mézeray, author of the famous *Histoire de France,* the husband of the beautiful Ferronière, with whom the King was carrying on an intrigue, intentionally infected himself so that he might destroy the King: and the disease did actually hasten his death. So widespread was it that no one was ashamed to confess to the fact; it was a common topic in society talk and became a theme for poets. It is undoubtedly one of the chief causes of the darkening of Europe which begins with the close of the Middle Ages, and it introduced into the highest and the lowest, the most physical and the most metaphysical activity of man, an element of suspicion that doubled the poison.

American gold became perhaps an even worse curse than syphilis. The sudden colossal influx of the valuable metals, of which there had been a great dearth during the Middle Ages, was an immediate cause in the extension of money-economy. Indeed, it made a real capitalistic organization for the first time possible, enormously increasing the gulf between rich and poor and bringing about a universal rise of prices with which the rise of wages could not keep pace. The first half of the sixteenth century saw prices rising a hundred and a hundred and fifty, in some cases even two hundred or two hundred and fifty per cent. The gift and vengeance of America for Europe were plague and poverty; or rather two plagues, syphilis and gold-fever. Everyone wanted to get rich as quickly and with as little effort as possible; even the soil of their native land was greedily searched for treasure, and actually new sources of the noble metals were discovered here and brought under exploitation by improved mining technique.

We see, then, that the period of incubation is over, the poison begins to work and grips the European organism, head, heart, and marrow.

Faust

All the tendencies of the dawning era were effectively concentrated by popular imagination in the figure of Faust. Faust is an *alchemist* and a black magician; what he aims at by means of his science and his magic is wealth and worldly power; he is a *Protestant* and a theologian, a fellow-countryman of Melanchthon, contemporary of Luther and for a time resident in Wittenberg. He is also a *Humanist* and a lover of the classics, offers to recover the lost comedies of Plautus and Terence, summons the shades of the Homeric heroes from Hades, unites himself, secretly rejuvenated, with Helena and so symbolically fulfils the intent of the Renaissance, the regeneration of the Gothic spirit by its union with the Classical. For centuries Faust was even reputed to be the real inventor of book-printing, for according to one tradition he made the matrices for the casting of movable types while Gutenberg was still printing with whole wood-blocks. This claim is disputed nowadays, but it was a sound popular instinct, nevertheless, that made him the creator of that invention by which, more than by any one other, men's autocratic impulse to intellectual expansion was nourished and satisfied. Faust, in contracting himself to the Devil, demands a written bond from him to answer all questions and to answer always truly; in this he is, therefore, the very personification of the deepest and most fundamental element of the time, an unbounded lust for knowledge, coupled with the belief that there are secret formulæ which can answer every riddle. And in another way, too, the legend proves its sureness of insight, in displaying Faust as the ally and bondsman of the Devil and so giving profound expression to the fact that all " pure reason " is of the Devil, and all striving for it a sort of blind hope roused in man by the ensnaring words of the serpent Satan, the words written on the first page of the Bible: "*eritis sicut Deus.*" The very *name* Faustus, the Fortunate, expresses the basic tendency which heralds a new age, the belief that what concerns us in this world is good fortune, and that good fortune consists in power, sense-satisfaction, and knowledge.

The extraordinary quality in Goethe's Faust-poem is the genius with which (perhaps even unconsciously) he has made it a compendium of the whole cultural history of the new age. Faust begins in mysticism and ends in *Realpolitik*. He stands for the whole temptation of modern man, which seduces him in a thousand forms and disguises, alcohol, sex, *Weltschmerz,* superman-yearnings; and withal he is the type of man unsatisfied, recognizing himself in every individual being, straining in agony after the unity beneath the appearances, but always in vain. The tragedy of Faust is the tragedy of modern man, of rationalism, scepticism, and realism. At Faust's side is the Devil, but Mephisto is not at all evil; he is merely frivolous, cynical, materialistic, and, above all, clever; the embodiment of pure, cold, barren intelligence, a highly differentiated brain-being and the completely logical representative of self-regarding genius. The intellectual, the purely intellectual, is the destructive dæmon in modern man, and Mephisto has the fatal keenness of intellectualism, sensualism, and nihilism. He displays to the wrestling genius of Faust the whole world and lays it at his feet, but Faust has to confess that he has been deceived, that this world only seemingly belongs to him, that in fact it belongs to his reason, which is itself unreal. Mediæval man, whose idea of the world was narrow and in some ways distorted, was possessed by the vision, for it was to him concrete and grasped by the heart as well as the head; but since the close of the Middle Ages there were no realities more. The last great reality which Europe had lived through was the madness of the incubation period. Then men did still live in a world that was real, for the mad do not, as superficial observers imagine, live in a world of phantoms, but, on the contrary, in one where everything is vivid and real, even their dreams, their hallucinations, their obsessions. But since that time everything that has happened has been but a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to grasp reality.

Triumph of man over God

It is hard to avoid the feeling that the conclusion of Faust is essentially unmoral. Faust is saved by love — but without sufficient cause. For there are two possibilities. One is that *everyone* can be saved by the divine Love, but in that case there are none that are damned and Faust only escapes the Devil because all escape him. That is not Goethe's presentation, for he accepts the mediæval picture, complete with heaven and hell, blessedness and damnation. The second alternative is nearer the intention; namely, that Faust is saved because he has led an especially pure and pious God-pleasing life. But that is just what he had *not* done. He never even strove against, let alone conquered, sin and the Tempter within; he never once fought for his God; the thought did not enter his head. Heaven is introduced only at the beginning and the end — an impressive curtain or sublime setting, an imposing patch of colour, which could not very well be omitted from the great canvas of Faust's soul-history — but the intervening scenes are unadulterated earthly life. Faust is a polymath, a philanthropist, a man of the world, colonist, banker, weather-maker, connoisseur, engineer, and much more besides, but never a searcher after God. How could he, then, ever receive salvation? There is more religion in the few words of the Bible concerning the threefold temptation of Christ than in the whole of Faust; Faust has temptations, indeed, but they are not the Christian's temptations.

Faust's struggle is philosophical, academic, mundane, the typical struggle of *modern* man, and it is characteristic of the poet that he regards the conflict as *the* tragic conflict, as the tragedy of the whole of humanity. Always we smell the eighteenth century, with its " common sense," " pure reason," with its one-sided outlook of a Classicism that aimed at cultivation and knowledge; but we smell the nineteenth century, too, the century of activism, supreme technology, and imperialism. The " crowning " achievement of Faust's life-work is that he drains a marsh.

From the theoretic to the geocentric world-picture

The victory of man over nature — that is the tune which rings out the life of Faust; and with that same tune, too, closes the tragedy of our age. At the beginning, as in the opening of *Faust,* comes the victory of man over God — that is, the discovery of an Independence of Man based on his ability to discover the laws of nature, an omnipotence founded on sense and reason. Agrippa von Nettesheim, from whom Goethe borrowed more than one trait of his Faust, says in a Latin epigram: "Agrippa is philosopher, dæmon, hero, god, and all." Only a very external and superficial judgment could assert that it was at the beginning of the Modern Age, and as a result of astronomical discovery, that the anthropocentric attitude was abandoned. The exact opposite is true. The mediæval feeling, firmly rooted in what was beyond man — in God, in the other world, in faith, and in the unconscious — was replaced by one which was fixed in what is human and nothing but human, in this world, in experience, in reason and consciousness. Man, the measure of all things, takes the place of God, earth of heaven; a hitherto *theocentric* view is replaced by one that is anthropocentric and *geocentric*, and the earthly, regarded hitherto with mistrust and contempt, is legitimated, assumes reality and, finally, sole reality. While the earth sinks in the astronomical experiments and systems to a tiny point of light, the head and heart of man raise it to be the supreme centre; alone important, alone effective, alone self-evident and true — the navel of the universe.

The Augustinian monk

We can scarcely picture to ourselves the immense elation that was produced in men of the time by this new knowledge, which at first was only felt as a general dark inkling. The whole age was pervaded by a deep enthusiam and passion for life. When we contemplatively review general temperaments and temperatures dominant at the various cultural periods, their colouring and their atmosphere, we are usually reminded of certain times of day or types of weather. The closing eighteenth century, the period of our Classicists, gives the impression of a calm afternoon twilight, the best time to sit at the window and chat over coffee and pipe. We have already compared the incubation period to a polar night; we might equally have said that its effect is that of a starry yet bitter winter night, when everything is shadowy, transparent, unreal, like the pictures of a magic lantern. But the dawn of the sixteenth century was like a cool summer morning, with cocks crowing, the air humming, all nature perfumed with fragrant life. The world has slept its fill and is stretching itself, full of vigour, to meet the day's work and greet the sun. A volcanic audacity, combined with a glorious and inquisitive thirst for knowledge, streamed through head and heart. Men searched for the fabled land of India and found a reality still more fabulous, a whole continent of things of which no fancy had ever dreamed. Men looked for the

Philosophers' Stone, but found something far more valuable: the potato. Men busied themselves with the problem of the *perpetuum mobile,* but a greater secret was unveiled in the eternal movement of the heavens. Yet, for all these magnificent discoveries in the world outside, it was a still more notable discovery which a young Augustinian monk made in the inner world of man — worth more than gold, tobacco, and potatoes, or printing or gunpowder or the whole of astronomy, for he pointed the way to his brothers to find their path back to God and to win true Christian freedom.

CHAPTER VI

THE GERMAN RELIGION

> *" The one thing that is of interest in the Reformation is Luther's character: indeed, it was the one thing that really impressed the masses. All else is a muddle and confusion, from which we still suffer daily."*
>
> *Goethe*

God and the peoples

The meaning and end of all creative activity is to be found solely in the proof that good, meaning, or, in other words, God lies everywhere before us in the world. This, the highest, the only reality, is ever at hand, but for the most part invisible. Genius makes it visible — that is the function of genius. The genius is called, therefore, god-inspired, for the fact of " God " fills him so wholly that everywhere, again and again, he finds it and sees it and recognizes it. It is this recognition of God that is the peculiar faculty and gift of every great man. Every man bears within him his own God and his own devil. " In thine own heart thy destiny doth lie " may be hackneyed by excessive quotation but, rightly understood, it unfolds a deep and far-reaching truth. God does not rule the world outwardly by gravitation and chemical affinity, but inwardly in the heart of man: as is your soul, so will the destiny be of the world in which you live and do.

What is obscure in an individual becomes clearer in a whole people. They make their own world and have to suffer it according as they have made it. There are gods of many kinds that man can pray to, and his choice amongst them will be decisive for him and his posterity. The savage dances round a log of wood and calls it god, and in very fact the world is for him no more than a dull and lifeless log. The Egyptians deified animals, the Nile, the sun, the whole of nature and, therefore, of necessity remained of a piece with nature, fruitful and vital, but dumb and identical — there are no Egyptian individuals. The Greeks, light-hearted speculators, having created a gallery of beautiful, idle, pleasure-loving, and deceitful men, called them gods, and through these gods found their ruin. The Indians, once deeply sure of the meaningless unreality of this world, henceforth had faith only in Nothingness, and their faith became their truth — unaffected by the passage of history, their glorious land became and remains a vast nothingness.

Christianity, we are accustomed to be told, brought all the peoples of western Europe into a common faith. But is it really so? Superficially, indeed, yes. But a deeper insight will show that there are national gods, national destinies, as there were of old. This is the real dividing line between peoples and not race or custom or outward custom, not politics or social structure. It is these, precisely these things, that are common to the civilized world. Top-hats and boas, music and street-scavenging are alike in Greece and Ireland, in Portugal and Sweden, and ideas of agriculture and etiquette and parliamentary government too. But the god is everywhere another god.

True, they are all Christians; and therein lies the enormous power and vitality of Christianity, that it has a message for every time, that it has a form which can find a place within it for all thoughts and all feelings. Had it been something that could live itself out in a trifle of nineteen hundred years, Christianity could never have been a world religion at all. What common basis is there for Tertullian's "*Credo quia absurdum*" and the almost mathematical rationalism of Calvin? For the doctrine of the Satanists and the almost familiar terms on which the Quakers live with their God? Was it only a matter of chance — related perhaps to the dictatorial temper of Louis XIV and Cromwell — that France was restored to Papistry while England held to the Reformation? The God for France, of France, was absolutist; the God for England, of England, Puritan.

The four components of the Reformation

In an earlier chapter it was stated that, fundamentally, the only Renaissance was the Italian, and that the Renaissance in other countries justified the name only in an unreal and impure sense. It is equally justifiable to say that the Reformation was in its essence and being a *German* phenomenon, and all other Reformations — English, French, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Polish — were but duplicates or caricatures. "The German," Moritz Heimann acutely observes in one of his essays, "does not regard the world of ideas, as other nations do, as a banner. He takes it several degrees more literally, and the real world, by the same token, more casually." This gives with precision the psychological attitude which distinguished the German people during the whole Reformation period; it absorbed the war-cries which it received from its religious leaders with a literalness that developed into obstinacy and misunderstanding, even to reversals of the original tendency; at the same time, paradoxically, in translating these new norms into political reality it displayed a remissness that astounds us. In short, it took the spiritual Reformation too seriously, the practical too lightly, and the result, to its own great harm, was that it fell between the two stools of the other great movements of the time which had the greatest historical influence — namely, Anglo-Saxon Calvinism, whose extraordinary energy and logical quality brought about a vast revolution of economic, political, and social practice, and Romanic Jesuitism, which with an equally wonderful force of soul and rigour of spirit called into being a moral and intellectual rebirth. The German, at that stage of his development, was not mature enough for *action* which would be practically successful and, therefore, historically effective. Dreamer of dreams, pregnant with the future, but incoherent and irresolute, he only had the power to give a vast new stimulus of which others have reaped the fruit. All the stirring thoughts which give the Reformation age its stamp were born on German soil, all worked themselves out in other lands.

So far from being a unitary movement, the German Reformation was the resultant of at least four components. The first — often enough regarded as the only one — was *religious,* but this was linked from the outset with a second of equal vigour, which was *national.* Rome was no longer to control, and the Church was to be, not "*welsch,*" but German. A foreign sovereign — for in his political significance the ruler of the Papal States was such — was no longer to receive a great part of German tax-revenues. And so appears the third component, the *economic,* which had a very wide extension, for it was the common stream of all the tendencies which sought to bring about trenchant changes in the social structure on the model of the primitive Church. Finally, there was the fourth influence, the ferment in *scientific* circles, Humanism and the birth of scholarship — this last the weakest component, but all the same not to be underestimated, since it was this which provided the method, the material, the intellectual weapons for the whole struggle. There was, however, a common focus and crucible of all these different elements in the *appeal to the Gospel.* There was nothing in the Bible about monasteries and monks, bishops and prelates, masses and pilgrimages, confession and absolution — here the religious aspect found foothold. Nothing about a supreme shepherd in Rome — here the national movement stood to fight. Nothing about fish- and game-preserves, tithes and feudal service — here the social reform found its justification. And nothing at all of the dogmas which the Church during the thousand years of its activity had created — here the philologists and historians drove their mines.

The Nightingale of Wittenberg

The presentiment, whether obscure or clear, conscious or unconscious, of a great revolution and transvaluation of values roused in almost all parts of the nation a vast, and predominantly a joyous, enthusiasm. Numerous writings of the time express the feeling of "the dawn," best of all Hans Sachs's famous poem "The Wittenberg Nightingale":

Awake, awake! The day is near,
And in the woods a song I hear.
It is the glorious nightingale,
Her music rings on hill and dale.
The night falls in to Occident,
The day springs up in Orient.
The dawn comes on and sets alight
The gloomy clouds of parting night,
And soon thereout the sun will shine
And moon depart in pale decline.

In a drama of the same name Strindberg completes the famous words of Ulrich von Hutten: "The spirits wake, there is a joy of living," with the cry: "Ah! something new draws near."

This something new was Martin Luther.

There is probably no personality in history of whom such conflicting opinions have been and still are held, as the Antipope of Wittenberg. There are Catholics who have rendered enthusiastic praise and there are Protestants who have regarded him with a fierce abhorrence; atheists have called him a spiritual saviour, and the pious have called him a corrupter of religion. To some he is "the German Catiline," to others the greatest of humanity's benefactors. Goethe saw in him a highly significant genius, Nietzsche a peasant bounded by the limits of his clogs. Schiller called him a warrior in the battle for the freedom of thought. Frederick the Great a raving monk and literary barbarian. Attempts have been made to prove him a glutton, a drunkard, a liar, a forger, a blasphemer, a syphilitic, a paranoiac, a suicide; and German artists have painted him with a halo.

Reformers before the Reformation

Many hostile critics have been at pains to deny him even all creative originality and to show that all the ideas he supported had been put forward before his time, and that there had been many "reformers before the Reformation," more important far than he. And indeed it is obvious that the currents from which the Reformation flowed were far older than Luther. We have already drawn attention in chapter iii to some of the many expressions of anti-clerical feeling with which the fifteenth century teems; nor could it be otherwise, since so huge an eruption as that which burst forth around Luther must have been brooding long and deep before it could discharge with such elemental violence. Towards the end of the century the anti-priestly feeling more and more gathered power. In Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools,* published in 1494, we find, amongst countless others, the following lines:

> For priests there's little reverence;
> Their worth is reckoned but in pence.
> Many a fine young clerk today
> Knows no more than a donkey may,
> And shepherds of men's souls one sees
> That tend the flock but for the fleece.

And in the almost contemporary satirical poem, written in colloquial German, *Reinke de Vos,* already mentioned, occur these remarks about Rome:

> Of law in Rome they boast and cant,
> But money's what they really want.
> No case so crooked, so obscure,
> That gold a verdict can't secure.

He wins who bribes — so much the worse
For the poor fool with empty purse.

And the whole thing is summed up in the famous doggerel:

So blind lead other blind today
And both from God must surely stray.

Furthermore, we have already heard how "Enlightenment," the habit of satirizing the Catholic Church, propagated and raised to the height of fashion by the Humanists, set the general tone of all cultured circles in Italy and even of the Pope's own immediate entourage. In the year before the Theses of Wittenberg Pietro Pomponazzi, a famous philosopher, produced a small work on the immortality of the soul wherein it was taught that the founders of religions had invented immortality for the benefit of the masses, who would only practise virtue if there were rewards or punishments of some sort — as a nurse invents a tale to induce good behaviour in a child, or a doctor deceives his patients for their own benefit. In another work Pomponazzi declares the efficiency of relics to be imaginary and says the same results would follow if the bones were a dog's; and the argument that belief in immortality is necessary because otherwise religion would be a deception he answers with the remark that such is actually the case: for, there being three codes (Mosaic, Christian, and Mohammedan), either all three are false, in which case the whole world is deceived; or two are false, and then the majority are. These and suchlike views were tolerated by the Curia, for anything might be spoken or written if only it was "*salva fide*" — that is, without affecting external subjection to the Church.

Wyclif too, as we have already remarked, anticipated the whole of the Reformation, and in some material points even went beyond it: for among his doctrines are the following: images should not be adored nor relics held holy; the pope is not the successor of Peter, and not he, but God alone, is the forgiver of sins; the blessing of bishops is worthless; priests should be allowed to marry; the bread and wine at the Holy Communion do not change into the real body of Christ, for true Christians receive the body of Christ daily by their faith; prayer should not be offered to the Virgin; prayer may be offered elsewhere besides churches. Johann

Wessel (1419–89) maintained that the unity of the Church depended on the community of the faithful with Christ, their heavenly supreme Head, and not on their subordination to a visible ruler; on earth most Popes had been caught in the net of error, and even Councils were not infallible. He rejected auricular confession, absolution, and "*satisfactio operis*," or justification by works, and pictured purgatory as a purificatory process of a wholly spiritual kind, upon which the pope could have no influence. "If the pope could decide according to his own will, he would not be the vicar of Christ, but Christ would be his vicar, for the judgment of Christ would depend on his will." In fact, as he says himself in pregnant words, he believes *with* the Church, not *in* the Church. The Erfurt theological professor Johann von Wesel (d. 1480) went even further, objecting even to the Communion and to the extreme unction, and maintaining that the consecrated oil was worth no more than that in which cakes were baked; fasting he thought superfluous, and a device introduced by Peter that he might have a better sale for his fish; finally, he called the pope an "empurpled ape." Erasmus of Rotterdam, too, the glory of the century, scorned the adoration of saints, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the entire dogmatics of the Schoolmen, whose subtleties, he maintained, would be unintelligible to Christ and all His disciples. The sacraments, in his view, were ceremonies of neutral value, the Bible in many places forged and in parts contradictory and unintelligible; nor could the divinity of Christ and the Trinity be proved from it. "But the Church has no more deadly enemies than the popes, for by their evil life they slay Christ a second time."

Words and Deeds

But the case of Erasmus, more than any other, discloses the enormous difference between Luther and his predecessors, who merely *taught* the Reformation, whereas Luther *lived* it. His uniqueness and originality lay in the boiling blood he infused into all these doctrines. Erasmus was beyond doubt the more picturesque, the broader and keener mind, the most logical, the more universal, and even the bolder thinker; but he was no more than a thinker. It never entered his head to give practical evidence of a single one of his ideas, and though he was of a far more radical and reforming temper than most of the reformers, he never appeared in person as the defender of the new movement, but fearfully denied it on every occasion. He repeated, over and over again, in his letters that he hardly knew the work of Luther at all — which is certainly the lie of a timid soul — and when his old friend Hutten came to his house in Basel, scorned and in poverty, to beg for protection, he brutally showed him the door. He trembled, we are told, at the word " death." This in itself would have been perfectly understandable in a man so wholly intellectual. But he was tainted, too, with far more ignoble fears for his wealth and influence; he trembled for the benefices and presents that he owed to the Church, and for his reputation among the clerical élite. It was not without truth that his enemies accused him of allowing himself to be lured like a dog by a piece of bread. Therefore history passes him by and gives the title of the great renovator and benefactor of humanity, not to him, but to the narrow and obstinate peasant's son. For the rank of men depends in general not on their thinking, but on their doing. Seneca was a better philosopher than Paul, yet we set the latter on an infinitely higher plane. The poor Seneca argued and declaimed with vigour and effect about love of humanity and Stoic self-sufficiency, but that was only one Seneca, the philosophic side of the man. The other was the Seneca of the world, the unscrupulous financier and millionaire, the subservient companion of Nero and his iniquities.

Luther may not have given much that was " new." But then, again, novelty is not the task of the great man on earth: in spiritual matters it is not the " what " that counts, but the " how." Genius drives nails home, and that, no more and no less, is its divine mission. Genius is no novelty-monger. It says things, at bottom, that everyone might say, but it says them more concisely and better, more deeply and passionately, than anyone else could have said them. It reproduces an idea of the time which is already dumb and asleep in the minds of many or all — but it repeats it with so overwhelming a power and so disarming a simplicity that it becomes for the first time real common property.

Certainly, " ideas," great spiritual currents, are always the decisive factor in the transformation and progress of history; but always, too — we see it throughout the course of our experience — they link themselves to great personalities. World-history is made by individual towering men, in whom the *Zeitgeist* is so distilled and concentrated that it is made vivid, fruitful, and effective for every man. The idea is ever the primary, but it is only through special individuals that it acquires life and reality. Luther did not invent the Reformation in the sense, for instance, that Auer invented the incandescent lamp or Morse the telegraph-key, but being filled, as no other was filled, with the new light of the age, he could be the first to make it visible to the world. His tongue became the tongue of his century, and it spoke the creative word which is ever the beginning. We shall come across men more distinguished, of richer and more diverse qualities, of freer and more expansive soul, but none who more fully expressed the urge of his time and its deepest wants, who could more simply and clearly, more emphatically and lucidly, declare in the name of his contemporaries what is and what must be. And it was for this that Adolf Harnack, the great theologian of our day, closed his address on the fourth centenary of Luther's birth with the words: " After the long darkness the way to the goal was made clear to us by this man, of whom we may venture to say that he was himself the Reformation."

The dual aspect of Luther

To understand Luther — which is a harder task for the twentieth century than is generally assumed — the fundamental need is to realize that he was very definitely a man of the transition, in whom old and new intermingled in a rare and strange fashion. Now, in fact, it is always such an alloy of old and new that is the material from which the great renovators, the reformers and regenerators of every kind, are created, and we shall meet the type over and over again. Nor are the reasons for this far to seek; it is only because the old still lives in the hearts of these revolutionaries with sufficient vigour that it can beget the fiery creative hatred which incites them and enables them to devote their whole being to fighting and eliminating this old. If we are to battle against something with deepest passion, we must first be moved to our depths by it, and for that to happen we must ourselves *be* it. Augustine could become one of the Fathers of the Church only because he had been a Manichæan; only the old aristocrat Mirabeau could get the French Revolution started, and none but the son of a minister, like Nietzsche, could become an immoralist and antichristian. Marx and Lassalle were the founders of socialism, but only because they had been born and educated in a thoroughly bourgeois atmosphere. Only a Catholic priest could break from the core of Catholicism. If we would become Paul, we must have been Saul and indeed must retain, all our lives, some part of what Saul was: the unceasing battle against oneself and one's own past is the only thing that gives a man the power to fight for the future.

The last of the monks

In the fundamentals of his character Luther was still purely mediæval. His figure imposes itself on us with its unity, its almost hieratic fixity and rigour — like the hard and harsh profile of a Gothic statue. There was a genius of dogmatic directness, of an orderly straightforwardness, in all his willing: his thinking was instinctive, pointed by emotions, anchored in feeling, working more or less on fixed lines. He was spared the curse — and blessing — of modern men, that they can see all the sides of a question with, so to say, the facet-eyes of insects. Yet these very times of his were marked by the emergence of complicated, diversified, many-coloured personalities; he was the contemporary of a diabolical ironist like Rabelais and of all the great figures of the Italian Renaissance. But even his fellow-countrymen included a diplomat and elastic-souled man of the world like the Elector Maurice of Saxony, a psychologist as subtle and variegated as Erasmus, a fluctuant, paradoxical creature like Doctor Paracelsus. But in Luther's character there were no shades or transitions; the contrasts lay frankly opposed to each other as we have seen them in mediæval humanity, with all the colours harsh, alternating abruptly, without blending or gradation — darkest doubt over against brightest confidence, radiance of kindness side by side with storm of wrath, gentleness with fiercest vigour. His action, moreover, was characterized by an elemental, unreflecting instinctiveness wholly contrary to the new age, and the rationalism which we have set down as the great theme of the time had no effect upon him. He abominated reason and all her works as heartily as any Schoolman, and called her the Devil's handmaid; he rejected the new astronomy because it was not in harmony with the Bible, and the great geographical discoveries of his lifetime passed by him unnoticed. Nor did he think in "social" terms, as his attitude in the Peasants' War showed, but was rather a fanatic for order, always on the side of the "authorities"; a supporter, in all social and political questions, of mediæval rigidity.

Nor does his life display anything of the systematic orderliness and clarity which mark our modern intellectual attitude. His driving force was the *unconscious;* without having willed it, he found himself the hero of his time; without having sought for it, he spoke the word which found a home on every lip; he moved with the certainty of a sleep-walker on the way which had brought so many others to ruin. In the midst of an age that was disintegrated, fumbling, and fermenting, he was a whole man, a fragment of unfissured mediæval force and self-sufficiency. His gaze looked into the far future, while his feet were planted firmly on a well-worn path. And this is what made him the leader that he was, and enabled him to stand like a second Moses at the parting of the ages, dividing with his staff the waters of the old and the new. He was, in a word, the *last great monk* of Europe, just as Winckelmann in the age of a dying Classicism was the last of the Humanists, or Bismarck in the years of victorious Liberalism the last great Junker.

On the other hand, Luther's consciousness perceived spiritual relationships which were only to be fully developed and realized in the course of centuries. The modernness of Luther's thought came from three main influences. The first is his *individualism.* By making religion a matter of inner experience he accomplished in the highest sphere of the human soul what Italian artists had done in the sphere of fantasy. Luther's belief that each soul must create its own God afresh out of its innermost being involves the final and deepest emancipation of personality. The second, connected with this, was a *democratic* motive; by his declaration that every one of the faithful was truly of clerical status, and every member of the Church a priest, Luther destroyed the representative system of the Middle Ages, which allowed the laity access to Christ only through the special mediation of the deputies of Christ and the hierarchy of his servants; and he thus introduced into Church life the same equalitarian principle which the French Revolution afterwards brought into political life. Thirdly, by his declaration that the whole of our ordinary life was a divine service, he introduced into religion a new *worldly* principle. Once admit that it was possible, everywhere and at all times, in every class and every craft, every profession or station, to find favour with God, and we have a sort of consecration of work: an achievement in its immeasurable effects, which we shall have to discuss later in fuller detail.

Haeckel, as is well known, laid it down as a fundamental law of biology that ontogeny, the history of the embryo, is a compressed recapitulation of phylogeny; in other words, the individual reproduces in the womb, in a brief form, the whole series of animal ancestors from the primal cell to his own species. In the same way Luther passed through the whole development of the Church; Church history being the phylogenetic side, and his personal history up to the great revolt the ontogenetic. He began with the compact faith of the Middle Ages in the efficacy of the sacraments and of the saints. At Erfurt he gave himself whole-heartedly to the doctrines of strictest Scholasticism; in the Augustinian monastery he sought salvation, with fervour bordering on self-annihilation, in the asceticism of the cloister, in prayer, watching, fasting, and endurance; in Wittenberg he devoted himself with glowing passion to the teachings of mysticism; in Rome he experienced the influence of the violent anti-clerical current, which had been unsettling the world for generations without being, as yet, in the least anti-papist; and it was only in the fullness of his age that he consummated the breach with the Papacy and the idea of the Church as sole dispenser of spiritual happiness.

The great crisis came during his monastic period, just at that critical time of life when abnormally gifted men are specially liable to fall into deep doubt of themselves and the justification of their being. Carlyle, who bears some resemblance to Luther, has given a vivid picture of this condition in his *Sartor Resartus*, a kind of autobiography. In that book the hero says of himself: "It seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured." But as he was one day wandering restlessly through the streets, tortured by his doubts, a sudden light came to him, and from it he dated his spiritual new-birth. "All at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: 'What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet, too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will, or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meet it and defy it!' And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me for ever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed."

It is this condition of infinite despair and nihilistic resignation that marks the turning-point in the life of men of the highest spiritual capacity. It is the transition-time at which the spirit that is coming to birth cannot any longer remain purely receptive, but yet has not found the clear guiding lines of its future productivity. The vision is sharpened for the contradictions, the incompleteness and absurdity of many things and relations, but has as yet nothing to balance the pessimism and enhanced irritability which is the precondition of all work of genius; no clear and certain consciousness of its mission. It is seen to be impossible to remain *in statu pupillari* within the limits of the old convention, but the possibility of effectively creating and teaching a new world has not yet dawned. Thus the terrified glance sees only the negatives; this is the stage of absolute self-negation, of the mood of suicide. Luther, if anyone, deserves the title of genius, for he alone of all the successful reformers of his time had built for himself the new world out of dæmonic struggles within himself.

Jehovah indelebilis

The doubt which oppressed Luther and almost overwhelmed him was founded on his fear of God and His law. It was the same torturing thought which had given Paul no peace in his Pharisee days: How is it possible to escape the wrath of God, how satisfy His zeal and His hard, almost unfulfillable, commands? It was, we perceive, the *Jewish* God that thus terrified Luther. Once again a man of real greatness, who could tolerate no compromise and no ambiguities, was cast into confusion by the paradox which runs through the whole of Christianity, the vast cleft which fifty generations had vainly called on their wit, their knowledge, and their faith to repair, attempting unceasingly to identify with the real God the God whom the Jews imagined as a purely national figure, concerned only with the interests of his own people, a hard autocrat and a pitiless persecutor of all rivals. It was something similar that the Stoics had attempted in laying down that God was only a spiritualized Zeus. Both doctrines are equally blasphemous. The

Marcionites, the most lucid and incisive thinkers among the early Christians, maintained quite logically that there were two Gods, the Demiurge, who had created the world — by the world they understood the Jews and therefore pictured the Creator as evil — and the " Highest God," who had sent His Son to redeem the world. They felt, quite rightly, that if they could not bring themselves to deny the god of the Jews as completely as any other national God, the only logical alternative was the acceptance of a dual divinity, after the Persian fashion, in which the Jewish God naturally became the spirit of darkness; but, as such a solution was nothing but a veiled relapse into paganism, the Church naturally found it unacceptable. The Marcionites, as well as others, had, moreover, suggested the total rejection of the Old Testament — and they were not alone in this — yet there also they failed, for Jehovah, a true Jew as ever, refused to be thrown out. Hence, even up to the present day, the purest doctrine that has ever been or ever will be put before the world was corrupted and confused by the spectre of a fierce and jealous Bedouin chieftain.

Luther's Damascus

Luther, too, had his Damascus; but the Saviour's words were not now: " Why persecutest thou Me? " but " Why thinkest thou I persecute thee? My Father is not Jehovah." He saw that the Christian God was not a " just " God, but a God of mercy, and that the meaning of the evangel was not the Law, but Grace.

It shakes us to the core to see how Luther at the time of this inner struggle was actually filled by a sort of *hatred* against God: there were moments in his life when his will strained to banish God from the world. The fact is that what we would love with our whole heart we must some time have hated passionately, or at least have striven for both eagerly and hopelessly, and piety is certainly among the first things of which we can say that it must be conquered before it can be possessed. Fundamentally Luther's battle of faith was against the comfortable, cheap, cud-chewing complacency of *God-saturated* people, against the deep immorality that lies at the core of the unreflecting self-satisfaction and the taken-for-granted inertia of average religiousness.

Luther's heroic period

The youth of Luther is truly dramatic in character; his taking of the vow amid lightning and thunder, his nailing-up of the Theses, his disputation at Leipzig, his burning of the papal ban, his defence at the Diet of Worms. These are scenes of a cosmic vastness and impressiveness, each of which sums up its own circumstances in powerful strokes, pregnant and unforgettable brush-strokes. And how dramatic, too, in its own way was Luther's unerring instinct in attacking just that abuse of the Catholic Church which was not merely the most irritating and absurd, but the most obvious and startling — the traffic in absolutions! In the course of time a regular stock-exchange for remission of sins had developed, in which everything had its price: perjury, rape, murder, false witness, fornication practised in church; sodomy was rated in Tetzel's instructions at twelve ducats, sacrilegious robbery at nine, witchcraft at six, parricide (a bargain!) at four. It was even possible, if not in theory, certainly in practice, to pay in advance for certain sins and hold, as it were, a deposit-account of absolutions; and the whole business was farmed out to big banking-houses and merchant firms who worked with the most modern methods of advertisement and salesmanship; in a lottery at Bergen-op-Zoom, for instance, the "valuable prizes" to be won included absolutions. The degradation and commercialization of religion could not possibly go further than this, and even the meanest intelligence could see that these usages had nothing to do with Christianity, or rather that they were an official and cynical denial and contempt of it.

The climax of Luther's work as a publicist came in 1520, when he published three small but decisively significant works: *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *Of the Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, and *Of the Freedom of the Christian*, all of which have a force and depth, a compactness and richness, a lucidity and orderliness, such as he never achieved again. He propounds with resistless oratory his doctrines that every Christian is a true priest; that the pope is not at all the ruler of the world (for had not Christ said before Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world"?); that the only valid sacraments are those instituted by Christ himself — namely, baptism, repentance, and Holy Communion; that the other added sacraments and the papal claims to universal dominion had brought the Church into subjection to a foreign and hostile power like that over the Jews in Babylon; that a Christian is a wholly free, serviceable labourer in all things and servant of all, the first through his faith, the second through his humility. A true Christian life is to be found only where true faith is active by love, where a task is performed with joy in freest bondage, where one serves another voluntarily and for naught. " Who can conceive the riches and the glory of a Christian life which has all things and can do all things, yet has need of nothing, that is lord over sin and death and hell, and yet the ready and useful servant of all! " Here Luther is very near to the mystics who have been the teachers of his youth, and this it was that enabled him to solve the great problem of the relation of faith and works (to which we shall return) with such utter clarity and simplicity. Later, embittered by petty annoyances and rancour, hardened by overwork, sectarian polemics, and above all by fears (unworthy of a great genius) of being misunderstood, he fell back from this supreme level.

Now, this movement did not start from learned Paris or magnificent Rome or world-ruling Madrid, but from the poor and newly founded University of Wittenberg. The explanation of this lies in the strange fact that it is almost always at the circumference that the new creative forces are brought to birth and momentous spiritual revolutions have their beginning. Christianity was born in a despised minor province of the Roman world-empire, the Mosaic monotheism saw the light far from the capital cities of the East, and Mohammedanism began its career of conquest in the Arabian desert. It was of equal necessity that Luther should be a child of the periphery in the social sense as well as the geographical and should rise from a low class, from darkness and nothingness. Such is always the case when God reveals himself in a man, whether powerfully or more weakly, in splendour or in softer light, for the whole world or for a small community. The divine wanders on the earth ever in the guise of a servant.

Luther's Pope

It has been said above that Luther was in many ways a thorough mediæval still. Thus, he was in the highest degree, almost blindly, a believer in authority. He denied the pope, but, as even his contemporary Sebastian Franck saw, " the world demands and must have a pope, whom all would believe and serve, even if he has to be stolen or dug out of the earth; and if every day robbed it of one, it would straightway look for another." Luther's pope was the *Bible,* which was to him literally true, word for word, without the slightest modification or limitation. He carried the Old Testament about with him everywhere, it has been remarked, like some useless vestigial organ which belongs to an earlier stage of development and whose function has long been lost. Moreover, he interpreted the " Word " by his own often mistaken and limited explanation. This narrow literalness of his finds a classic example in the famous debate about the Last Supper at the religious discussion at Marburg. When the discussion came to the words of institution: "*τοῦτό ἐδτι τὸ δῶμά μου, τοῦτό ἐδτι τὸ αἷμά μου*," Zwingli explained them as being symbolical, the ἔδτι not expressing any identity, but being translatable as " *significat.*" During the discussion Luther incessantly tapped on the table in his indignation and repeatedly muttered: " *est, est.*" It was the outer grammatical form which was alone decisive for him.

Triumph of Gutenberg man over Gothic man

And yet even in this rigid superstition of words we may detect the modern stamp that equally characterizes Luther. For the hitherto highest authority, the pope, who was a living authority of flesh and blood, he substitutes the dead authority of the writing, which consists of printer's ink and paper. In place of the false infallibility of a fallible human being we have false dogma in a *scientific* and utterly inhuman form. Theology gives way to philology — in the end to micrology — and for the Holy Church we have of all things the unholiest, the school. In the unconsciously maturing fact that the centre of faith was no longer the life and suffering of the Saviour, but the record thereof contained in a *book,* is signalized the victory of the new type of man, who writes, prints, reads — and is scientific. It is the herald of a *literary* age. In the same way, according to Protestant interpretation, the sacraments do not work by some secret magic, but only by the word. And so Gutenberg humanity triumphs over Gothic. Thenceforward it is a straight line to the civilization and religion of pure reason, to the age of Enlightenment. Luther was neither an incarnation of, nor even a prophet of, these inevitable consequences, but the Church he established fulfilled them. His own activity and work are unintelligible without the printing-press. He is the first great publicist of Germany, and his ninety-five Theses are the first " late extra " of the history of the world.

Harnack says somewhere in his *History of Dogma* that Luther behaved in the Church like a young child in his home; and this remark almost completely covers both the strength and the weakness of the reformer. His work displays the inco-ordination and clumsiness of a child, its limitations and manner of thought, but at the same time its purity and intuitiveness, its enthusiasm and its irresistibility. Because he was a child he was enabled to give his people a religion, but because he was a child he was unable to build a religious structure. Because the driving force in him was a childlike impulsiveness and elasticity and wilfulness, his work lacked all continuity and logic. Later he relapsed in many points, becoming unfaithful to himself and to true Protestantism. Protestantism is clear and courageous protest against every forced belief, formula, and lip-service, a return to the purity of the early gospel doctrine and the essential facts of Christianity; it is the rejection of all mediators that would interpose between God and the believer, it is the piety and discipleship of Christ, constituting the true and only priesthood. But even in his own lifetime, and not without his own co-operation, a great deal of what it had been his historical mission to fight had come back again: a new system of clerical lust for power and of dull numbing by empty forms began to spread abroad, a new façade-Christianity received homage, a new dialectic, far surpassing the Catholic in hair-splitting and absurdity, came in for the second time and — with far more ignoble apparatus — made the Gospel dark. For the second time humanity was divided into first- and second-class Christians: but while the Catholic priest derived his superiority from a transcendent source, the hegemony of the Protestant pastor and theologian was based on the far weaker and more fragile claim that he was superior to the laity in true scientific understanding of the Bible.

And what understanding could Luther or his followers have of the real meaning of the phenomenon of the Saviour? The appearance of Christ in his environment is wholly strange to, and almost incomprehensible by, the modern (and especially to the European) feeling. It is a magic radiance, having the enchanted glow of opal, in which endless brown wastes, *fata morgana,* and the quivering stillness of noon are reflected. It is a life-form to the echo of which our imagination is almost insensitive. More, it is the undoing of that form itself. All the glittering yet almost voiceless variety, the vast, dignified simplicity and unambiguousness of the East are in early Christendom; and with it an almost hysterical sympathy with the heart-beat of every creature, a denial of individualness of such unqualified clarity as could become the ruling passion only in the soul of a very late humanity. An extremely primitive and yet immemoriably old Culture speaks to us out of the Gospels — the simplicity of natural man combined with the wisdom of the ages. A Luther may be able to clear the Christian faith of the surface-coating produced by centuries of barbaric misunderstandings, concentrate it, simplify it, so that it is easier to survey and grasp by the reason; but the infinite tenderness and delicacy, the supersensitiveness, of such a spiritual condition is inaccessible to a healthy German peasant. An honest Saxon theologian could not react to the sparkling colour and exotic variety of this world of imagination; nor could the child of a dawning newspaper age recapture the fathomless prime-wisdom of a world of belief for which this life is a sojourn, and the infinite is self-evidently home.

Luther as creator of a language

So, too, with Luther's translation of the Bible, an achievement which may be regarded, according to the standpoint from which we approach it, as a failure or as a masterpiece. Very little of the scent and local colour and setting of the Biblical world, or even of the feelings and thoughts of the authors, has been salvaged in it, but on the other hand Luther did succeed with his very decidedly Germanized Bible in writing the most German book in German literature. Hence the exaggerated claim has often been set up that he was the creator of modern German, and no less an authority than Jacob Grimm agrees with that judgment: "Luther's language, by reason of its wonderful purity and its enormous influence, may be regarded as the kernel and foundation of the New High German idiom." Now, we should certainly not forget that Luther, as he himself admitted, employed the "language of the Saxon Chancellery," a sort of common idiom meant to hold a balance between the language of central and south Germany, which originated in the court of the Luxemburg kings in Prague about 1350, and thence spread to the other German courts. Two points should, however, be noted: firstly, that in the time of Luther there really was no common tongue among the people, but only innumerable dialects, and that it was only because of the amazing circulation and influence of his works, above all of his Bible, that this common language gradually penetrated into all circles and was adopted as the universal written German; and, secondly, that this pooled Saxon was a dry, heavy-footed, and jejune office-language, and that Luther moulded it into an instrument for the expression of the highest, deepest, most powerful and delicate feelings and forced it into use for every conceivable experience. Out of the material at his disposal he created the very reverse of a protocol-language. He tells us in his *Table-talk* how he questioned the mother in her home, the children in the street, and the common man in the market-place, and noted how they answered him; and by such means, thanks to his sensibility and an imitative power nearly related to the actor's, he brought off the *tour de force* of expressing both the most subtle and learned ideas and also the simplest and most ordinary things in a language that is thoroughly natural, vivid, intelligible, and effective. We meet here yet another indication of that peculiar dramatic gift that dwelt in Luther. It finds utterance also in his polemic and doctrinal works, which, assuming a fictitious opponent, have an underlying character of dialogue that reminds us of Lessing. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that but for Luther Germany would today be a bilingual nation, half Low and half High German.

Luther and the arts

His musical ability, too, which was considerable, echoes in his style, and he excels especially in working up to the *furioso* climax. He composed the tunes for several of his own hymns, played the lute and the flute, understood and appreciated polyphony, and intensely admired the Dutch contrapuntalists. He made the German hymn into a basic element of the Protestant service, and his wish was that the schools should assiduously practise it. On every occasion he praised "*Musica*," "the glorious, beautiful gift of God, sister of theology," with an enthusiastic gratitude.

But immediately we turn to the other arts, we are struck by the great limitations of this great man. Even to poetry his attitude was unsure. Of all the kinds of poetry he gave first place to the didactic fable because it was the most useful for the understanding of ordinary life — a banausic attitude, which, however, was of the time. His views on the drama were no less utilitarian: Terences' comedies, he said, are an instructive mirror of the real world, Latin school plays a good training in language, religious plays an efficient means for the propagation of evangelical truth. The arts of form simply had no existence for him: in 1511 he travelled through northern Italy to Rome, at the height of the

Renaissance, but he has not one single word for the beauty of Italy's works of art. In Florence he was most impressed by the cleanliness of the hospitals, and in Rome he only complains that so much German money flowed thither to pay for the great buildings. Even in the cathedral of Cologne and the Minster of Ulm he was only interested in the bad acoustics, which interfered with divine service. For the historical significance of Rome he had as little understanding as for the artistic; in fact, in contrast to his friend Melanchthon, he seems to have been completely lacking in the historical sense. Thus he called Julius Cæsar "a mere ape," but praised Cicero as a philosopher far above Aristotle, because he used his powers in the service of the State, while Aristotle in contrast was a "lazy ass." To explain away such judgments as these — concerning the greatest strategic and political genius of Rome, and the most universal and active mind of ancient Greece, the mind that gathered, ordered, and set down the sum of Classical knowledge and founded half a dozen new sciences — by merely labelling them as "subjective" is insufficient. They could only be the result of a complete blindness to historical relations.

Luther and the Peasants' War

This crucial defect of historical understanding shows itself in the crudest form in his attitude to the revolted peasants, which has left an ugly blemish on his whole life. The Peasants' War was the supreme attempt towards a social revolution that Germany has ever experienced, and it was only rawness of discipline among the peasants and the dark jealousy among their leaders which prevented its reaching its goal. Its source, as we have said before, lay in the ideas of primitive Christianity. Primarily it was directed against the wealthy clerical hierarchy, much less against the temporal princes, and not at all against the aristocracy; and it was even hoped that the Emperor himself might head the movement. Luther also, who had always preached the return to the Gospels, was assumed to be the obvious leader. The most dangerous feature of the rising was the fact that from the first it was not limited to the open country-side, but spread to the towns, where there had long been a violent ferment going on among the proletariate and with them the poorest of the clergy; in a word, the whole Fourth Estate was concerned in a movement of extraordinary extension and depth.

The demands of the famous Twelve Articles of 1525 were moderate enough: each parish was to choose its own pastor, tithe-dues were to be maintained, but other dues were to be removed, serfdom to be abolished, the rights of hunting, fishing, and collecting wood to be unrestricted. As the movement proceeded, further perfectly reasonable demands were put forward — for example, unity of standards of coinage and of measures throughout Germany, removal of all tolls, the reform of the judicial system. The nobility were to be indemnified for their losses under these heads out of the property of the Church, the complete secularization of which was one of the most important points in the program. The opposition, however, refused any concession, war burst forth, and, like bees when they swarm, the peasants poured in from all sides. There was no real resistance in the towns, all the princes in Franconia and on the Rhine submitted within a few weeks, and a vast peasants' Parliament was called at Heilbronn to discuss the reform of the Empire in detail. But at the same time a far more radical group, with communistic tendencies, the " Anabaptists " under the leadership of Thomas Münzer, was making victorious progress. If Thuringia and Franconia had united for a final stroke, the collapse of the " Whites " would have been almost inevitable, but, squandering and dissipating their strength in sieges and plunderings, they were defeated — chiefly by the cavalry, in which they were themselves wholly lacking — in seven battles that followed in rapid succession; and by September the revolt was practically at an end. The narrowness, selfishness, and cruelty with which the whole question of the peasants had been handled in the war left their traces through all the following centuries and are not unconnected even with the confusion of the present day.

At this decisive moment in German history Luther failed completely. He quoted Jesus Sirach: " give the ass food, a load, and the whip," and applied these words to the peasants; he thought of the countryman, not as the feeder, but as the beast of burden of human society. Atrocities were committed by both sides during the war — though certainly more by the opposition — and such things were quite in keeping with the character of the age. Luther's attitude of extreme hostility to the peasants may be explained to some extent by the fact that he received very one-sided accounts of their activities; and, moreover, must have felt a justifiable resentment at his purely religious work being side-tracked into politics. But it is utterly inexcusable in him that he took up this position of ill-will even before the outbreak of hostilities. In his reply to the Twelve Articles he flatly rejected almost all their claims. Thus, to the quite legitimate claim that the tithe should be used in the first place to pay the minister and secondly to support the poor of the parish, his answer was: "This article is mere plunder and highway robbery; for they want to seize for themselves the tithe, which is not theirs, but the masters', and do therewith what they will. If you wish to give and do good, do it from your own goods." (And whose goods, if not the peasant's, provided the tithes, that iniquitous and oppressive burden, which often reached as much as a third of the harvest and was never by any chance employed for purposes of common weal?) Bondservice he maintained was a God-pleasing institution — the Bible as usual being drawn on for the arguments, since Abraham had had bondservants, and Paul taught that every man should remain in that calling to which God has called him. But later on, too, when there had come to be some reason for disapproval, the kindest that we can say about his tone was that it was mistaken. In his pamphlet *Against the Peasant Robbers and Murderers* he wrote: "It were high time that they should be strangled like mad dogs" and "Now should every man that can, smite, strangle, murder, openly or secretly. . . . So wondrous are the times that a prince can deserve heaven better by bloodshed than others by prayer." In this there bursts out the raw heathen, the barbarian and tyrant that lived, subdued only with difficulty, in the depths of Luther's soul, and we are brought up against the appalling fact that in this God-forsaken sixteenth century — which counts as the great age of Christianity's renewal — Christians became practically extinct.

Luther's slackening

The worst side of the whole business, however, was that in his astonishing violence and unwisdom Luther was to a large extent influenced by mere opportunism. Now opportunism is, of course, a quality which should not be judged too harshly, it is too human to be rebuked too strictly, and it is often the defect of the strongest characters, whom the very fact of living so fully in their own sphere makes over-anxious for its security and only too often inclined to compromise with the claims of the external world so as to retain their own peace and freedom. Goethe and Schiller, Kant and Schopenhauer, Descartes and Galileo, all had more or less of it. And it is obvious beyond dispute that the statesman cannot steer his course without a full measure of it — nay, that his very function consists in the exercise of a more or less well-directed, shrewdly accommodating, and far-sighted opportunism. But we are entitled all the same to say that if there is one man who may never be opportunist, it is the reformer, for his fundamental mission and highest vocation is *not* to tack, *not* to compromise or adapt, *not* to advance by by-ways, but to force into practice the definite ideal that has gripped his soul without concession, without restriction. Every reformer is a monomaniac.

This was what Luther had been in the beginning, and it is the basis of his power over his contemporaries and his influence on history. Later on he swerved, and relied no more on the healthy instinct for right and truth which was his strongest potentiality, but tried all diplomatic finesse and half-way houses of all sorts, the side on which he was weakest. Maybe he believed himself to be helping his "cause" — namely, the spread of the Protestant Church — but the cause *of him,* that for which God sent him into the world, was a very different one: it was always to speak, without qualification or hesitation, looking neither to right nor to left, what was in his heart. Maybe his sudden decay was due to some extent to a sort of *tædium vitæ* to which he fell a victim remarkably early in life. As early as 1530 we find him writing to Ludwig Senfl, the most important German church musician of the time: "Indeed, I think my life will soon end. The world hates me and cannot endure me, and as for me, the world irks me, I scorn it." His was probably one of those volcanic natures like Herder's, Rousseau's, or Nietzsche's, which use themselves up in colossal eruptions and whose life has no autumn.

Luther and transubstantiation

Luther, as we have said, had not the gift of understanding things historically and was in general an unscientific mind. He had not the power to arrange his ideas, to connect them and deduce them one from another; which is the more surprising because the scientific literature of the sixteenth century has a splendid record of lucid structure, strictness, and comprehensive outlook. His inability to think systematically and logically is responsible for a good deal of the later babble and chatter of Protestant theology, of which an example can be seen already in his views on the nature of Communion.

The conception of Transubstantiation presented no difficulty to the mediæval world-view, since for it, as we have explained at length, only universals had real existence. Therefore, not the individual Host, but the highest universal of the omnipresent God that appears in it possessed, and alone possessed, reality. There were, of course, free-thinkers even in early days who opposed the doctrine of real change of substance, but they had no success. Most famous was the Berengarian struggle in the middle of the eleventh century led by Berenger of Tours, who taught that the words of institution were to be understood as ennobling the elements through the spiritual presence of Christ. His doctrine was condemned and he himself forced to a recantation in which he declared that the body of Christ was bitten in pieces in Communion by the teeth of the faithful. On the other hand the Swiss Zwingli, Calvin, and their followers declared that the Communion was only a symbolical act, a memorial ceremony, so that the Host merely *represented* the body of Christ. Both views are clear in themselves, and a clear decision between the two is possible. Even today anyone can make really his own the idea of an actual transubstantiation, and, equally, anyone can conceive Communion as a purely spiritual act. Luther, with the mediæval bent of his mind, was undoubtedly inclined to the former view, which indeed he stubbornly maintained at the Marburg conference. But he would not allow that the Catholics might be right in a single point; yet the Calvinistic view, again, was for him too modern. Thus he chose a middle interpretation, and this was such that no man can imagine anything whatever by it. The body of Christ was in the consecrated material in the sense that fire is in a heated iron, and as heat and iron subsist together, so too do the Host and the body of Christ. Thus — as Voltaire put it jestingly, but expressively — the Papists enjoy God, the Calvinists bread, the Lutherans bread and God. A more hopeless confusion than Luther's it is impossible to conceive. He eliminated the mystery — through pure anti-papalism — and rejected the philosophical explanation; he taught a transubstantiation in which the elements undergo and do not undergo change.

Luther and the dogma of Justification

But the central problem of the whole reform movement and the key to all its later development was the question of the essence of justification. Catholic doctrine bases repentance on three stages, the "*contritio cordis,*" the "*confessio oris,*" and the "*satisfactio operis.*" Luther admitted only the first of these, repentance of the heart, and fanatically — and what was worse, unintelligibly — opposed the other two, confession and works. But this involved a still deeper complication. The point on which, obviously, every solution depends is the decision between free-will and the rule of predestination. This is the primary problem, for before we can approach the question of the form and manner of justification, we must make the preliminary decision whether the human will is free at all. Here Luther, as he often and gladly admitted, was influenced deeply and enduringly by two of the greatest teachers of the Church, Paul and Augustine.

Paul

Paul is the first figure in the world of the New Testament whom we can concretely grasp. The Gospels display to us figures in a flickering, uncertain, one is almost tempted to say impressionistic light, at one time in misty veiling, at another in dazzling over-brightness; but the letters of Paul are like a voice that we can hear close by, his is a dramatic figure that we see striving, stumbling, victorious; a mortal who personifies that most fundamental quality of all life, paradox; a man, like all earthly creatures, now harsh, now gentle, here boundless, there narrow, fool and yet saint. And it is just because he is the most human of all figures whom we know in the history of early Christianity that he became at all later turning-points the leader and the type. All the great renewers of Christianity have linked themselves on to Paul, and among them, inevitably, Luther.

There are two diametrically opposite views of the rôle that Paul played in the development of Christianity. One, which maintains that without Paul the teachings of the Gospels would never have conquered the world, and that Paul is, therefore, the real founder of Christianity, is so absurd and so contemptible that it is not worth our while to refute it. The other view derives from Nietzsche, the most intellectually powerful of all the opponents of ecclesiastical Christianity, who, with an unfailing instinct, made this greatest of all the Fathers the target of his main offensive. In his posthumous fragment *The Antichrist* he paints the development of early Christianity, as it presents itself to him, with the brush of a Dante. " This glad messenger lived as he taught, *not* to ' redeem ' mankind, but to show how man ought to live. . . . He does not resist, he does not assert his rights, he takes no single step to ward off his final destiny; rather, he challenges it. . . . And he prays, suffers, loves *with* those and *in* those who do him evil. . . . *Not* to defend oneself, *not* to show anger, *not* to condemn . . . but yet not to resist those that are evil, but to *love* them. . . . At bottom there has been only one Christian, and he died on the cross. The ' glad tidings ' *died* on the cross, and what since that day has been called so was the very opposite of what he lived, an ' ill tidings,' a *dysangelium*. . . . Manifestly, it was just the essential that the primitive community missed: how to die after this fashion, in freedom from and sublimation above all resentment. . . . But his disciples were far from *forgiving* his death — that would have been evangelical in the highest sense." (We might remark, parenthetically, that an antichristian who can write words like this may be far nearer the understanding of the Saviour than those Christian ministers who seek to prove their Christianity by babbling the phrases of the Gospels so long that they have lost all feeling for them. God grant us many more such atheists as Nietzsche! If they possess so noble a soul, so pure a passion for the truth, and if they live so exemplary a life of saintliness and patience, they deserve God better thereby than they would do by confessing Him.)

May we, then, say with Nietzsche that Paulinism is nothing more than a single great act of vengeance of the " Chandala-soul " — a barbarization and complete dechristianization of Christianity? Such a view would certainly be wrong. For that which in the story of Jesus gave most profoundly to think was his death. In this lay the supremely new, the inconceivably terrible and wonderful fact, that the greatest whom God had ever sent into the world had not been elevated above all men as their guide, their teacher, and their king, but brutally executed, put to the shameful death of a slave — and that of his own will and seeking. The question then arose how all this was to be explained; and the answer, the only answer, was that it was for our sakes that the grand reversal of the world-order had been allowed, that for us who are unjust the justest had suffered injustice, that the innocent had suffered so that we might find atonement and blessedness. There was no other way in which Paul could make the thing intelligible, and all the creeds right up to the present day, true or false, have found no other explanation.

If we would sum up Paul's historical significance in a single phrase, we might say that he was the first Christian theologian. He took the religious ideas which were spread about in early Christian communities and brought them into a sort of system, into a logical sequence of ideas which could be easily impressed, retained, and propagated. But in so defining this achievement of Paul we must not commit the error of belittling it. Every genius uses his own language, a private idiom which is naturally intelligible to only a few beyond himself. He therefore needs an *interpreter*, an intellectual power that will try to speak forth the ineffable, to express the inexpressible, to put into earthly, comprehensible forms the eternal, infinite idea. A good formula is not to be despised, for it also is spirit — the spirit which preserves for later times what would otherwise have vanished. This is the sort of service which Aristotle rendered to Greek thought. The formula of the crucified Son of God, who has washed away the sin of the world, gave to thousands who were not ripe for the purer doctrine of Christ a symbol that was not an empty fancy, but something by which they could benefit both in practice and in theory.

The Judaic apostle

But there is one word in Paul's doctrine which will not readily fit into the spirit of the Gospels — the notion of sin. The God of Jesus is grace, infinitely deep and infinitely wide, reigning beyond good and evil — grace not as reward or recompense, but simply grace as itself. God is not the judge who acquits, but the Father who forgives. But for Paul, God and man are somehow engaged in a mysterious balancing of accounts; he could not endure the thought that God was, not just, but *above justice;* and indeed to most men this idea would have meant no liberation, but a tormenting riddle. It was an idea too wide, too great, too difficult, and too deep. Jews could not grasp it because for thousands of years God and law had been the same thing — and in Paul himself it was the Pharisee that responded so willingly to the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ. The Romans, for their part, were far too well broken in to legalism for it to be possible for them to give up the idea of a satisfaction, and the Greeks, with their concrete corporeal form of thinking and their all-defining rationalism, would have found a God of boundless grace incomprehensible.

Therefore it is with some justification that Lagarde made his apparently paradoxical statement that Paul is the most Jewish of all the Apostles. The assumption that God could not wipe out original sin except by the sacrifice of His Son goes back to the Old Testament God of Jewry, who is above all a just God, who still works on the plan of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; it makes the Atonement something of a business deal. Yet it is only this fundamental premiss that God's grace could not be bought save by the death of the innocent — that it had to be bought at all — which was repellent; *within* the actual doctrine of salvation Paul completely abandoned the juristic and Talmudic standpoint and emphasized again and again that man is not justified by works but only by grace and by faith. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans: " For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law "; and in Ephesians: " For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast "; here there is already a negation of the freedom of the will. But already in the Epistle of James we have the doctrine of what is called *synergism,* the working together of faith and grace: a combination which found little favour with Luther. " What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? . . . Faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone. . . . Seest thou how faith wrought with (δυνήργει) his works, and by works was faith made perfect? " Thus the New Testament itself contains a conflict of opinion on the doctrine of satisfaction.

Augustine

Augustine, the second great teacher of Luther, asserted with absolute definiteness the unfreedom of the will and predestination. For him man is a "*massa peccati,*" and, therefore, a "*massa perditionis,*" of which, through the "*gratia gratis data,*" a "*certus numerus electorum*" is saved. Adam alone possessed the freedom not to sin ("*posse non peccare*"), and because of original sin mankind is in the condition of unfreedom ("*non posse non* *peccare* "). Hence works obviously lose all significance. If we object and ask why God in His eternal provision should not have left the evil uncreated, Augustine replies with an æsthetic argument, and says that sin also belongs to the unitary picture of the world, as black in its right place to the total effect of a picture, or as a perfect song depends upon contrasts. The opposing doctrine of Pelagius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus, though even in Augustine's lifetime a wide acceptance was accorded to the mediatory position taken up by the "Massilians," monks of Marseilles whom the Middle Ages called Semi-Pelagians. They taught that grace was indispensable indeed, but that its working referred to the free will of man, so that predestination rested on the omniscience of God, which foresaw how men in the future would act by the freedom of their will. They taught, also, the cooperation of faith and works, and since then, timidly in theory, though more decisively in practice, sanctification by works has established itself more and more firmly in Catholicism. In any case, the idea has been capable of extraordinarily wide application, embracing both the most revolting practice in the matter of absolution, and the loftiest holiness of life; so far as the principle is concerned, the repulsive and unchristian character which the Protestants tried to attach to it is quite undeserved.

Furthermore, a work that outwardly harmonizes with the commandments is not for that reason alone a good work; the goodness arises only with the *intentio,* the spirit in which it is done; and correspondingly, according to Catholic doctrine, the mere intention, if the opportunity or the possibility fails, is as valuable as the accomplished work. The Council of Trent says: "Faith is the origin of all salvation, the groundwork and root of all justification, for without it it is impossible to please God and to become as one of His children." In similar fashion Luther: "Good and pious works never make a good and pious man, but a good and pious man always does good works. As trees must be before the fruits, and the fruits make the trees neither good nor bad, but the trees the fruit, so must a man be pious or evil in his heart before he does good or evil works." Luther's tree corresponds obviously to the Catholic "intention," but if we think the comparison out it involves a recognition of the natural necessity of the works, for it is of the essence of the tree — of the good tree certainly — that it should bring forth fruit. The reproach that Catholic doctrine demands sanctification by works and thus encourages self-righteousness has been handsomely answered by Adam Möhler in his "*Symbolik*" with the thesis that the destination of the doctrine is precisely to call forth *holy* works, and to bring it about that we *ourselves* become just.

If, now, we attempt to review the meaning and content of all this in an unprejudiced spirit, a strange conclusion emerges. Protestantism denies justification by works and puts repentance in the heart, in mere faith, and yet at the same time it demands a practical, active Christianity and thus again comes back to a sort of sanctity of works; more, as we shall soon see, it sanctifies even *profane* works, thus achieving the last degree of sanctimoniousness. Catholicism accepts justification by works, but means by the latter only performances of a minor sort, and thus it arrives at apotheosizing the unworldly and other-worldly life, which is concentrated on inner penitence and meditation, and which knows nothing of profane works in the ordinary sense. Thus, starting from opposite standpoints, each ends in the contrary view from that with which it began: Protestantism, opposed to works, ends in a glorification of the most worldly tasks, the State, the magistrates, the family, manual work, science, even war; the more worldly Catholicism rises to complete contempt for all these things: emperor, wife, learning, property, and the active life are things from which it flees to its heights. In addition we have the further paradox that reactionary Catholicism was often more tolerant, conciliatory, and accommodating than freedom-loving Protestantism. Even so unprejudiced a judge as Zinzendorf emphasized that "Catholics carry upon their lips and their banner an anathema against their opponents, but in practice are often very complaisant towards them; we Protestants have liberty upon our lips and as our watchword, and yet in practice, though I say it with regret, there are amongst us many conscience-hangmen."

Actually in this question of justification the issue is really only theological; no Catholic who was a true Christian ever believed that works only suffice, and no Protestant if he was a true Christian believed that faith alone was enough; for faith in Christ and imitation of Christ are completely identical. If we believe in Him, we must live His life, or at least try to live it, and whoever does this is Christian and has proved his faith in the surest fashion. To assert one-sidedly the value either of works or of faith is to fail in the understanding of Christ, to whom doctrine and works were inseparable. It was precisely because He lived out His teaching to its uttermost consequences that He became the Saviour, and it was precisely because His life was such that it was elevated to a doctrine.

But if we balance Protestantism and Catholicism against each other in this way, the former still suffers a serious defect in its fundamental rejection of monasticism. In a world of cheating, murder, and lust the possibility must be given for a certain class to live only for God, both for their own sakes and for the sake of their example to others. Obviously, not all Catholic monks have been true monks. Doubtless only a fraction of them have been urged to the cloister by a passion to live for God. But it is the fact that Protestantism has provided *no room* for such people that is so serious. The suspicion is unavoidable that bare utilitarian tendencies played their part here, and that the beginning of a mercantile age was unwilling to allow any justification for the existence of "idlers."

Calvinism

In the religiousness of the Reformation period we may trace, broadly, three stages. The lowest stage was the current Catholicism, which, if not in theory, at any rate in practice, was nothing but the crudest worship of external forms and ceremonies, mechanical repentances and services. Opposed to this was the doctrine of the reformers, in whom we may see the second stage, and who emphasized the unique power of faith, although to a considerable degree (especially in the interpretation later given to it) their teaching remained narrowly and rigidly doctrinaire, compressed dogmatism. The highest stage was seen in the so-called radicals, who were deadly serious in their desire to return to primitive Christianity; they included in various shades and tones the whole spectrum of unqualified religiousness, from the extreme revolutionary fantasies of the Anabaptists to the purest speculation of Protestant mysticism. If the reformers were heretics to Catholicism, the radicals were heretics in the second degree, heretics of the Reformation; the former aimed at a Church without a pope, the latter at a Christianity without any Church at all.

The second, Protestant stage found its purest representative in Calvinism. In his Church government in the republic of Geneva Calvin founded a system which far surpassed anything in the way of supervision or inquisition of conscience that Catholicism had ever attempted. Clerical police interfered everywhere; every expression of natural enthusiasm and spontaneous enjoyment was suspect, forbidden, and punished. Every kind of festivity and occupation, games, dancing, singing, theatre, even the reading of novels, was forbidden. Divine service was held within bare walls, without decoration, ornament, or altar, without even a picture of Christ to beautify it. Cursing, skittles, loud jesting, and naughty talk were punished by severe penalties, adultery by death. Calvin, unlike Luther, had a deductive mind, a clear and systematizing intellect. In him the Latin qualities of order and logic, of arrangement and method, but at the same time of uniformity and mechanism, for the first time rose to the supremacy which they have held throughout the later cultural development of France. For all the difference of outward structure, there is a curious similarity between Calvin's Geneva regimentation of faith and Jacobinism. Remove the veneer of Christianity with which this evangelical community was coated, and we find the same half-ludicrous and half-terrible figure of unreason and megalomania. It rests on two premisses, both foolish, both untenable — firstly, that all men are naturally alike or at least can be minted alike by suitable and properly handled dies, and secondly that the State is justified in taking, and even obliged to take, note of everything, whereas in truth its essence is just the reverse and its sole task is to deal with that which the individual will not or cannot control. It is only a secondary difference that this dread monster appears in Calvin as a theocracy and in Jacobinism as philosophy; and moreover there are even certain similarities in their rationalistic interpretation of religion.

On the one side Calvinism is wholly mediæval, for it does wholly realize the spiritual state, the omnipotence of the Church, which had always been the aim of the Papacy; it is even immemoriably old, for it is as old as the Old Testament. But on the other side it is very modern, far more modern than Lutheranism: namely, in the much more fundamental purism of its complete iconoclasm and of its symbolic interpretation of the sacraments;

in the decided emphasis it lays on the republican and democratic element and its absolutist policing of its subjects; in its humanistic-critical treatment of theological problems; and above all in its militant, aggressive, expansionist imperialism. From Geneva comes the paradoxical but highly significant phenomenon of a Christianity of the sword; it is the origin of French world-policy, Dutch colonial expansion, and English sea power.

The burning of Servetus is not a " stain " on the story of Calvin, in the same sense that Luther's attitude during the Peasants' War was so, but a logical consequence of his system. Calvinism was an undisguised hierarchy, and the burning of heretics belonged in it as an organic part. Servetus, who apart from his theology was one of the greatest physiologists of his time, had denied the Trinity as unbiblical, tritheistic, and atheistic. Thereupon he was prosecuted by Calvin, with the hearty approval of Melanchthon, who declared the act to be a pious and memorable example for the whole of posterity. Such indeed was the view, at the time, of almost all Protestants on questions of religion; and the now conventional notion that they were the champions of freedom, while the Catholics were the servants of darkness, is based on a liberal perversion of history. In fact Protestantism could wipe out error with a far clearer conscience than Catholicism could, in that it believed in predestination; Luther's inclination, as we have seen, was in the same direction, but he expressed himself only in an obscure and contradictory fashion. Catholicism never approved it, and it was only spared official condemnation out of respect for Augustine. Calvin, however, backed the doctrine, of which Charles V said that it was more bestial than human, to its extreme logical issue.

The Radicals

The more heretical a belief is, the purer it tends to be; indeed the word " *Ketzer* " is actually derived from the Greek " *katharos*." Really free religiousness was at that time found only in the radicals, Karlstadt, Münzer, the Anabaptists and Mystics. Karlstadt was one of a type that is thrown up by every new movement, the muddle-head that undoes or compromises everything. Münzer is harder to judge definitively: he and his followers were called by Luther " prophets of murder " and he in his turn called Luther " the uninspired, soft-living flesh of Wittenberg," " arch-rascal, arch-pagan, Wittenberg Pope, dragon-basilisk." His aim was to abolish not only papacy, bishops, prelates, and monks, but every kind of spiritual mediator; he meant it seriously when he said that every believer was his own priest and could find salvation only by direct intercourse with God. He desired the elimination not only of prebends and monasteries, but of every kind of privilege, lordship, and subordination, and even all personal property. He opposed not merely the authority of the Church tradition, but the authority even of the written letter and appealed only to the *inner* word which God even today proffered to every truly illuminated soul. Certainly he was a fanatic who did not shrink from deeds of violence, destruction, and bloodshed, but he had a high degree of religious genius. It is a criminal eagerness, he taught, that leads us to vaunt the gentle Christ and His mediatory passion, seeking to save ourselves the cross by His cross, to avoid the travail of rebirth by merely believing. Here he rejects decisively, and with the most cogent reasons, the Lutheran doctrine of justification. For him faith can be born only in doubt and desolation, in purgatory and hell, and each one must find his way to God anew amid all the agony and toil of the night. The revelation of the inner word is impossible until the ego, the world, and the flesh are dead. Christ cannot become man, nor the Holy Spirit reveal itself, in a carnal man. At the same time Münzer believed in the possibility of visions and illuminations, in higher inspirations and immediate interferences of God.

Associated with Münzer were the Anabaptists, who like him taught that the members of the new kingdom of God received their inspiration direct from God, by means of absorption in a tranquillity wherein all natural feelings and passions are extinguished. Seeing that such a relation to the eternal was possible only to a fully developed Christian, they rejected child baptism, and the only qualification for admission to their community was personal Christianity and moral piety; to the sacraments they attached no value. Many of them had and rejoiced in chiliastic imaginings. All oaths were sinful, all churches homes of idolatry; and here they went even further than the iconoclasts. Lofty idealism supported on a glad will to martyrdom lived in their teachings — which were more decidedly rejected by the Protestants than by members of the old faith.

Sebastian Franck

But in any discussion of the German Reformation it is always the Mystics who deserve first place, for they embodied in the purest and deepest form the religious temper of the time and people. History is, however, a Philistine critic, which records in heavy letters only the names of the successful, but loses sight of, or remembers in only the smallest type, the men who swam ahead of them in the stream of time.

Most important of these mystics were Kasper Schwenckfeld, Valentin Weigel, and, above all, Sebastian Franck.

Schwenckfeld, a Silesian to whom Luther was bitterly hostile, devoted his whole life to polemics against the written word, in which he saw a new slavery of the spirit and a new externalization of Christianity. The ministers who erred so far as to think that they alone were in possession of the true interpretation of the Bible were to him the founders of a new system of pretentious and monopoly-seeking clericalism. The whole of the external Church must, therefore, be abolished so that an inner may take its place. Weigel, whose writings were only spread abroad in manuscript in his lifetime, teaches that we can only know what we bear within ourselves. Thus, when a man understands himself, he has grasped the all: he grasps the earthly world because his own body is the quintessence of all visible substances, he grasps the world of spirit and angels because his spirit comes from the stars, and he knows God because his immortal soul has a divine origin. The epitaph he chose for himself ran as follows: " O man, *summa summarum,* learn to know thyself and God: so hast thou enough, both here and there." Sebastian Franck, of Donauwörth, at first a Catholic priest, then a Lutheran preacher, finally a member of no creed, led an uncertain wandering life, amid much opposition; for like Schwenckfeld he taught that the letter was the sword of the Antichrist, which slew Christ; he himself would have " a free, unsectarian, non-party Christianity, bound to no outer thing "; " in our time three creeds have sprung up that have great following — Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Baptist — and the fourth is already on the way: namely, that all external preaching, ceremony, sacrament, banner, profession will be swept from the path as useless, and we shall build in its place an invisible, spiritual Church, ruled only by the ever invisible word of God and with no outer means." From this position outside all the churches he wins to the greatest tolerance: "Mad zeal vexes all men today, that we should believe, as a party and like the Jews, that God is ours alone, that there is no heaven, faith, spirit, Christ but in our sect; each sect will allow its God to none other, even though a Saviour did come for the whole world. . . . To me Papist, Lutheran, Zwinglian, Baptist, yea, even Turk is a good brother. . . . In all ways I would have one be a free reader and judge and I would have none bound to my reason."

Not only on the Communion, but on all the teachings and institutions of Christian religion Franck took the symbolical view. The Fall of Adam and the Ascension of Christ are the eternal story of man, and in every man they are accomplished anew; Easter and Pentecost are transitory likenesses of the eternal Easter and Pentecost; finally, the Bible itself is an eternal allegory. As many that know it not are Adam, so also there are many that know it not that are Christ. Christ is crucified daily: "There are Pharaohs, Pilates, Pharisees, scribes, who crucify Christ ever and ever again in themselves, though not outwardly and in the manner of the story." In short, there has never been anything that does not in its own fashion still exist and eternally continue to exist: Antiochus, Sennacherib, Herod still live. God himself, however, is undefinable, and what one says of Him is only shade and appearance. He is and works all things, and were sin something and not nothing, then God would be, also, sin in man. God condemns no one, but each man himself; to the righteous He is near, though far, and never nearer than when He seems to be furthest. The godless are hurt more than they are helped by good works, for good works do not make holy, just as evil works do not condemn; they only show forth the man. Therefore all works done in faith are equal. God, the contrast and counterpart to the world, is to the world Devil and Antichrist. The world's riches and wisdom are before God the greatest poverty and folly, worldly power the greatest slavery. To the world, on the contrary, Antichrist, Satan, and his word are Christ, God, and the evangel.

Birth of cabinet politics

Now, during all this confusion and purgation what was the German Emperor doing? In spite of all his busy cleverness and successful activity, he did essentially nothing — that is, nothing corresponding to his world-historical position and the world-historical hour. High politics in Europe took quite other paths than those of reform and religion. It was just at this time that the great powers were consolidating and establishing themselves with the outlines that, speaking broadly, they have maintained throughout modern history: the western power of France, the northern of England, the central of the Habsburgs — the last most extensive and dangerous of all, since it included not merely the hereditary lands of Austria (to which Bohemia and Hungary were shortly to be added), but Spain, the New World, the Netherlands, Franche-Comté, Naples, Sicily, Sardinia, parts of South Germany (Hither Austria, so-called), and also, for a time, Württemberg. It was apparently invincible and therefore called forth ever fresh ramifications of alliance against itself. The great opposition of France and Habsburg which has been determinative of most of modern history now appeared for the first time in clear and sharp outline, the primary objects of struggle being the duchy of Milan, south Italy, and Burgundy, to which both sides put forward historical claims. Charles V always regarded himself as in the first instance a king of Spain and, as emperor, felt himself not as suzerain of Germany, but as ruler of the world, as monarch of the universal empire of the Middle Ages. In his time and that of his still cleverer pupil (and later opponent) Maurice of Saxony, cabinet diplomacy took the helm — the diplomacy dictated only by the personal advantage of the dynasty; the accursed thing made up of lying deceit, obscure threats, half-promises, treacherous hedging, and deliberate setting of one against another, which achieved its highest triumphs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And simultaneously there developed and expanded a large-scale corruption-system of quite new universality and unscrupulousness, possible only in an age of money-economy: it was at this time that gold and politics were united in that inseparable alliance which is characteristic of the modern age. The election of Charles V is already typical of the new method. Besides Charles there were three possible candidates: Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony (who was the fittest), Francis I of France, and Henry VIII of England. But Charles won, not because he commanded more sympathies or because political considerations were on his side, but simply because the great banking-house of Fugger guaranteed him the sums he had promised the electors. In other words, even then the greatest power was not

Spain or France or England but the financier with his money-bags.

Charles's attitude to the evangelical question was never dictated by any consideration for the needs of the German people, but by the position of his own foreign policy at the moment. The three decisive constituents out of which he built his policy at one moment and at another, were the Pope, the East, and France; and this emerges clearly in the whole history of the German Reformation from Luther's breach with the Pope to the Peace of Augsburg. In 1521 Charles needed the alliance of the Pope for his first war against Francis of France: hence the veto on all innovations by the Edict of Worms and the ban of the Empire upon Luther. In 1526 the Pope concluded with France the Holy League of Cognac, which was directed against the Emperor, and immediately the Protestants received a favourable atmosphere for the spread of their doctrines at the first Reichstag of Speyer. But the Peace of Cambrai followed in 1529, and with it the second meeting at Speyer and the renewal of the Edict of Worms. In 1530 Charles was crowned by the Pope, and the reply of the Great Parliament at Augsburg was sharp indeed. In the following years the danger from the Turk became ever more imminent, with the result that in 1532 there came the Religious Peace of Nürnberg, in which Protestants were permitted free practice of their religion until a general council should meet. The Peace of Crespy and the armistice with Turkey gave the Emperor a free hand again for a new attempt to impose Church unity by force. The Schmalkaldic War followed, in which Charles's brilliant victory at Mühlberg enabled him to force on the Protestants the Interim Peace of Augsburg, of which popular talk said that it " had the fiend behind it." Then the situation was once more changed by the revolt of the Elector Maurice of Saxony, the Augsburg Interim was cancelled in the Treaty of Passau, and by the Peace of Augsburg the rulers of the land and the free cities received the right to decide the religion of their subjects: " *cuius regio, eius religio.*"

During the whole of his reign Charles V enjoyed the most amazing good fortune; he was victorious against internal and external enemies, against rebels in Spain and the Netherlands, against popes and heretics, German dukes and Tunisian pirates, French and English, Indians and Turks. And yet all these victories at bottom led to nothing worth recording as a significant fact in European history; for it was implicit in his character, and that of the Habsburgs generally, that all their successes should *run dry.*

Psychology of the Habsburgs

This family, which contributed so decisively to influencing European history for more than five hundred years, is a psychological riddle. In his monograph on Vienna — a masterpiece of psychological vivisection — Hermann Bahr says: "The Habsburgs have included men of genius and simpletons, men tempestuous and peaceful, courteous and boorish, victorious and vanquished, sociable and unsociable, men of all kinds, but having one common quality, the lack of any sense of reality." And in his brief but vivid *Das Geschlecht Habsburg* (*The Habsburg Family*) Kahler considers one of the most important qualities of the Habsburgs to be their isolation. "If there is one thing that distinguishes the Habsburgs from the descendants of other families, it is the fact that they are all . . . continually veiled in secrecy. In each one of them, and in all their activities, whether in political decisions or in the involuntary movements of their bodies, we can trace a remoteness from reality." The one observation complements the other; they had no sense of reality because they were themselves not real. Bishop Liudprand of Cremona describes an audience he had with the Byzantine Emperor, whom he visited during the tenth century: "After I had three times thrown myself in the dust in reverence before the Emperor, I raised my eyes, and him whom I had seen as but of moderate height and enthroned upon the earth I saw now, in wholly new robes, towering almost to the roof. How it happened I cannot tell, unless perchance he were raised by some machine." A similar machinery of a psychological kind served the Habsburgs: it was their natural gift and inherited faculty at any moment to hover "in wholly new robes" high above the earth. All the Habsburgs can be somehow included under this common denomination; they are here, yet not here, stronger than the real, yet weaker than it, like some bad dream or nightmare. They are transparent, two-dimensional, not to be grasped; there is no bridge from them to humanity nor from humanity to them. They are islands. "Reality," they said, "was to be moulded according to them, not they according to reality"; but this would be by very definition genius, for what else is genius but the high-tension will to model the world and the age according to its own pattern? Yet the Habsburgs, unfortunately, were no geniuses; and anyone who possesses that particular quality of genius without possessing genius itself is a dangerous fanatic and a foe to mankind. For centuries they controlled the real world from a self-created shadow-world, from which they never moved — truly a strange phenomenon.

But the reverse of this curious displacement is the superficiality, the lack of enthusiasm, passion, and devotion, that characterizes all the Habsburgs; and not unrelated with this is their complete inability to learn, the famous Habsburg stubbornness, which scorned to learn anything fresh from men, things, or events, to thrive and develop on life. They have no evolution. Whether they were papal fanatics like Ferdinand II or liberal reformers like Joseph II, dull-witted legitimists like Francis II or anarchists like the Crown Prince Rudolf, the world-picture which they wish to force on the rest of humanity is always drawn from out of their own inner being, as the spider draws the threads of its web from its body. A classic example of all these qualities may be found in Francis Joseph I: in a life of nearly ninety years no man and no event ever came really near to him, and in a reign of nearly seventy he never allowed himself to be influenced by any adviser or by the change of the times, he never uttered a noteworthy or even a warm word, never made a strong gesture, never did any very lofty or very base action, whereby he might have been revealed as a brother of the rest of the world; it is as if history had meant to unite all the typical qualities of the family in its last representative. And the whole line — that is the tragic-ironical epilogue of this six hundred years of destiny — ends with a cipher; Charles I was nothing more than a company officer — the day of the Habsburgs was fulfilled.

The secret of Charles V

The other Charles I, called as German Emperor the Fifth, was the *beginning* of the line of the true Habsburgs. Maximilian was still an ordinary German duke — gay, fond of sport, talkative, genial and pleasant, energetic, even if superficial, in his universal interests, a man among men. But the Habsburg veil shrouds his grandson. Who has ever read into his soul? Was he perhaps a megalomaniac of power, an insatiable glutton for lands, who tried to assimilate in the vast belly of his empire the whole world, African coasts, American lands of fable, Italy, Germany, eastern France? Yet at his accession he gave away almost half his inheritance to his brother, and at the zenith of his life he suddenly abdicated, retired to the cloister, became a gardener and a watchmaker, and had his own funeral mass read to him. Was he perhaps a faithful son of the Catholic Church who attempted forcibly to prolong the Middle Ages and to stop the cleavage of the Church at any cost? Yet for half his life he was the bitter enemy of the Pope, and his landsknechts plundered and devastated the Holy City in the most horrible fashion. Was he German like his father, Spanish like his mother, Netherlandish like his home, French like his mother tongue? He was none of these — he was a Habsburg.

With an almost incredible genius Titian has seized this mysterious, isolated, unhuman quality of the Emperor in his two portraits. He depicts him riding in the grey of morning over the field of Mühlberg, a knight in black armour, with lance couched, approaching slowly like an irresistible fate, a victor who has no joy of his triumph; with the world at his feet — but what is the world? In the portrait at Munich he is seated, clothed in simple black, his glance directed into unfathomable distances, as though all around him were air or glass through which his gaze pierces, having no part therein, a profoundly lonely creature, completely railed off from all life. In these pictures are expressed the whole tragedy of sovereignty and the whole curse of a race that cannot have a heart.

Because he had no heart, all his sharp wit, his diplomacy, his comprehensive building and planning accomplished nothing. The central idea of his times was meaningless to him. He had it in his grasp, supporting himself on the knights, the lower clergy, the cities, and the peasants, to break the power of the greater dukes and to build up a real monarchy — the course, in fact, that commended itself to no less a man than the first Napoleon. The age was driving towards such a solution, and in all the other greater nations the experiment succeeded. We may doubt, however, whether it would have been a blessing, for Germany at least, if the Emperor had answered the challenge of the hour, for the democratic monarchy would soon have yielded to an absolute one, the nation State to a unit state, the German people to a uniform despotically governed mass — and governed, moreover, from Spain.

Victory of theology over religion

The real winner in these wars which fill the first half of the sixteenth century was the almost always defeated France, which rounded off its frontiers in the most useful form by seizing Metz, Toul, and Verdun out of the German confusion, and Calais from England. The English, as is well known, came over to the side of the Reformation in a very strange way: namely, through the wantonness of a king who split off from the Roman Church because the Pope would not grant him divorce and remarriage. In Sweden the new faith was introduced by Gustavus Vasa, who liberated his country from Danish supremacy and laid the foundations of its later position as a great power. In countries, too, which later became Catholic again — Austria, Bavaria, Hungary, Poland — Protestantism was making victorious progress.

On German soil the change took many forms, communistic in the Anabaptist movement, socialistic in the Peasants' Revolt, democratic in the turmoil of the towns, aristocratic in the risings of Sickingen, Hutten, and the lower nobility. Protestantism, however, took no part in all these movements and so arrived at last at the princes, and became duodecimo-autocratic, courtly and particularist. This aspect it permanently retained, and the fact that it never understood how to fuse with the genuinely new movements sealed its fate. Luther himself, to use his own homely expression, liked to hang on the lips of the great lords, and his collaborator Melanchthon did even more so. An odour of servility, a sneaking, humouring, eavesdropping quality, got into the routine of the churches and universities from then onwards and we can see the beginnings of the typical theologian who fawns upon his patron, the subservient tutor, the schoolmaster trembling for his daily bread, the devoted personal priest who " knows his proper place "; and the source of them all is Protestantism. For the Catholic priest still has in the background, to strengthen his self-respect, the omnipotent Church, but the evangelical has only his own paltry parish. In the former case the priest is still the servant of the idea, of the one universal Papal Church, in the other he is the valet of one or another insignificant lord. Hence, also, Protestantism involved not only an intolerance as stiff as that of

Catholicism, but one that was far more square-toed, far more local, sectarian, and petty.

Though there were plenty of men, certainly, who like Melanchthon would have preferred the vision of the secrets of the Divinity to their intellectual research of them and started from the principle that " to know Christ is to know His deeds, not to reflect on His natures and the manner of His incarnation," yet, taken all in all, the Reformation did not mean the outburst of a purer, deeper, more fundamental relation to the Godhead, but, on the contrary, the victory of knowledge about faith over Faith itself. *Theology* triumphed at the last over religion.

In practice, too, it was *party* that triumphed. Faith became more and more a matter of community and co-membership. Now, it may be possible to break stones or visit a music-hall in common, or to eat and drink in common, even to murder and take part in politics in common, but one cannot have mass-worship of God any more than one can have mass-love. The characteristic but senseless prejudice of modern man, that all human activities can, nay, must be carried out in common, the ambition of the modern age to make of all humanity a factory, a barrack, a vast hotel, a trust, a reformatory, began to infest religion too. The consequence of this massive mass-religiousness was the Thirty Years' War.

The Reformation was not a creative religious movement. There have been some who quite seriously wished to include Luther among those who have inaugurated new religions, but such men were possible only in the East and in the Classical age — though perhaps again possible in Russia today. The atmosphere of the sixteenth century was not a religious one, it was far too dry, too cool and sharp; it was a world of merchants, diplomats, antiquaries, scribblers, far removed from all craving for eternity, devoted wholly to this world; and even a Luther could not remain uninfluenced by the spirit of the age.

The monster of creation

The men of that age almost make us believe the sad words of Goethe: " Men exist only to trouble and kill each other; so was it, so is it, and so shall it ever be." Yet post-Christian humanity has one vast superiority over the man of antiquity — it has a bad conscience. Human beings have not altered; they live for the senses, act for their own advantage, are selfish, use force, deceit, and injustice; but they no longer do so thoughtlessly and in good faith, but haltingly, secretly, and fearfully. They no longer possess the humour of the beast of prey. That is perhaps the one achievement of Christianity, so far.

Here we touch upon the nuclear problem of Christianity, the immense question: How is it that, on the one hand, man is undeniably an evil creature, and yet, on the other, does not *will* to be evil? Why does not he make a clear decision between his two possibilities? He is neither beast nor angel; the beast does, without moral scruple, all that is of service to itself and its posterity; the angel possesses a conscience and acts accordingly. Mankind does neither one thing nor the other, he lives a life neither God-pleasing nor natural. Thus, through this portentous dilemma, he is a grotesquely unique and contradictory absurdity in creation as a whole. He is a huge abortion, a walking question-mark. If he is good, why does he do evil? If he is evil, why does he love the good? The destiny of every one of us puts these two terrifying questions anew.

Grobianism

J. V. Jensen, in his description of Peking, makes the striking and illuminating remark that the present-day Chinese of the upper classes remind us of the men of that time. "Many a crafty old Chinese might quite well have been one of the great men of the Reformation period, as we see them in their portraits — reserved, but inwardly full of the religious ambitions of the time, of its vigour and its covetousness. . . . In spite of the splendid portraits of the time which we possess, in spite of all that history has preserved for us right down to the smallest particulars, I have tried in vain to give myself a picture of these men as they lived, although we know for certain that they did live. I have never been able to see and hear them convincingly. Some sort of contact with them is possible, perhaps, through the peasant of today — something of the mask — but only in China can one really relive the Middle Ages, for thus it was that they lived, queerly hesitant, dawdling wilfully and from a sense of their style, as peasants will even today and, above all, slow." Indeed, the whole culture of the time was peasant-like; even the rulers, even the artists and the educated classes, were only better-class peasants, and we can well understand that a subtler and more complicated individual, with a sure sense of nuances and an inkling of the deeper irony of things, such as Erasmus had, must have felt the world to be an intolerable place. Further, there was in the men of that age something of the wily shrewdness of the Mongol — which strikes us as a natural product needing no explanation and therefore is in no wise unmoral — though certainly they had none of the psychological flair and adaptability which Jensen so praises in the Chinese. The period had an extreme coarseness, and the nascent rationalism, which is its mark, gives to its products an impression of something primitively artificial, childishly mechanical. The Humanists, who gave the science and the poetry its special quality, seem like poorish copies of the Italian Humanism, which they reproduce in cheaper colours. There were, of course, extraordinary talents among them, and one of the most interesting of these — if for no other reason, for his amazing many-sidedness — was Konrad Celtes, the German arch-Humanist. He was the first German poet to be crowned as poet laureate, the first German professor who lectured on general world-history and on German imperial history; he was the discoverer of the *Tabula Peutingeriana,* a Roman map of the third century after Christ. He reformed the Nürnberg woodcut craft, inspired a new musical form, the so-called ode style; and published (indeed for a time was believed to have composed) the Latin dramas of the nun Hroswitha.

Among the most outstanding traits of the time is the so-called "Grobianism," a term popularized, though not invented, by Sebastian Brant: "We have now a new saint, Grobian, whom everyone likes to parade." Almost all the writers of the age hurled pig's language at each other. Luther's polemical language was rarely anything but immoderate (for instance, he says of Erasmus: "Anyone who suppresses Erasmus stamps out a bug, and then it stinks worse dead than alive"); Fischart attacks the fashion of coarseness, but so coarsely that he belies his own efforts; and even so refined a scholar as Reuchlin called his opponents dogs, horses, mules, pigs, foxes, ravening wolves. With this desire to be popular and this wish to hit the object as telling a blow as possible, satire attained to a veritable hegemony and let itself go in a way that has never been paralleled in Germany before or since. The favourite reproach is that of folly: "fool" is perhaps the commonest word in printed and everyday language alike. Brant's chief work bears the title *The Ship of Fools,* Thomas Murner's best-known product is

The Conspiracy of Fools; the cleverest book of the time is the *Praise of Folly* by the great Erasmus, in which everything is pilloried as folly, not only avarice, drunkenness, ambition, war, uncouthness, but marriage, child-bearing, philosophy, art, the Church, the State. Hans Sachs's works, too, swarm with fools.

Rabelais

The satirical genius of the time from which everyone, consciously or unconsciously, borrowed had its home not in Germany, but in France, in François Rabelais. On the whole, his style is unpalatable to present-day readers. Along with an overpowering force, he possessed to an exaggerated degree what the French call "*la nostalgie de la boue.*" There is an almost pathological pleasure and expansiveness in the way in which he goes into all his *naturalia,* which may not be blameworthy from the moral standpoint, but is certainly so from the æsthetic — whatever may be said to the contrary by the narrow-browed "naturalist *à-tout-prix,*" or the numerous inverted Philistines for whom a thing is forceful or suggestive precisely because it is revolting or unappetizing. Quite as intolerable as his coprophily is his excessive complexity, his passion for twisting and turning any subject with which he deals. His basic qualities are colossal exuberance, badness of taste, and ineptitude: indeed, his liking for a poor joke went so far that even his death was an opportunity for a play on words — he put on a domino because in the Bible it is written: "*Beati, qui moriuntur in domino.*" But for the very reason that all he writes has the same superhuman dimensions as the stature, courage, and gluttony of his hero Gargantua, it is illegitimate to apply to him the ordinary canons of beauty and logic. His appetite for life and the representation of life was obviously gigantic, and his only error, perhaps, was that he assumed the same boiling-over vitality in his reader. In all that satirical, anti-clerical, and anti-scholastic age no one satirized the Church and Scholasticism with anything approaching his splendid frankness. He was a sort of satirical cannibal who gulped down vast helpings of hypocritical priests, barren professors, and corrupt officials. The "*esprit gaulois,*" the "*esprit gaillard,*" rose in him to a victorious and elemental outburst, to argue with which would be as absurd as arguing with a volcano. And yet he strikes us as wholly un-French, since he completely lacks that unadorned lucidity, that elegant sureness of touch and form, which are the supreme literary glory of the land of "*clarté*" and "*bon goût*." But this literature was yet to be born, and Rabelais, such as he was, is the most fascinating and pregnant example of all the strength and faults of his time. He is immoderately eager for life through secret disgust of life, noisily cheerful because of his profound melancholy and distractedness, mordant and vicious from love of humanity and overflowing heart, madly foolish through the clearest common sense.

Plebeianism unmitigated still

At that time, as we have already observed, the North, especially Germany, still possessed a most plebeian character. Machiavelli in his account of Germany in 1508 said that the Germans did not build, and spent nothing on dress or on furnishing their houses, and that all they cared about was to have an abundance of bread and meat and a well-heated room. Erasmus gives the following vivid pictures of German inns: "No one welcomes you on your arrival, lest they should seem to be eager after guests, for that they regard as mean and despicable and unworthy of German seriousness. When you have cried yourself hoarse before the door, a head will at last poke out from one of the little windows, like a tortoise's . . . and you will have to ask this protruding face if you can come in. If he does not turn you away, you are to understand that there is room for you. Your question as to stabling is answered with a wave of the hand, and you can treat your horses as you please, for no servant will put a hand to them. . . . When you have seen to your horse, you betake yourself as you are into the public room, boots, luggage, dirt, and all. This heated room is the common property of all the guests — a separate room in which to change your clothes, to wash, warm yourself, or rest is something that you never find here. . . . Thus you often have eighty or ninety guests together, travellers on foot or horseback, merchants, sailors, carriers, peasants, boys, women, the healthy, and the sick. One may be combing his hair, another be washing the sweat off, another cleaning up his shoes or riding-boots. . . . It is an essential of good inn-management that everyone should be dripping with sweat. If anyone, unused to such a steamy atmosphere, opens a window a crack, there is a shout of "shut it." . . . At last, they serve the wine, which is uncommonly sour; and if one of the guests takes it into his head to ask for a different kind for his money, they pretend at first not to hear him, but with an expression on their face like murder. If the request is repeated, he is told that " dukes and margraves have put up at this house and no one has yet made any difficulty about the wine, and if it does not please thee, thou canst find another inn." (for in their view only the nobility are human beings). . . . Soon the dishes appear with a great to-do. The first is almost a meat-broth with slices of bread, and this is followed by some hashed or pickled meat or salt fish. . . . Then a somewhat better wine is brought in, and it is marvellous what shouting and uproar goes on when the heads have been warmed by it. No one understands another. Often clowns and buffoons join in the confusion, and it is indescribable what delight the Germans take in these people, who produce such a tumult by their shouting, their leaping and cudgelling, that the room threatens to collapse. . . . If any journey-weary traveller wants to go to bed immediately after the meal, he is told he can wait until the rest retire. Then he is shown his niche; and that, too, is no more than a bed, for, apart from the bed itself, there is nothing one can use, since the sheets had their last wash probably six months ago."

The Classic Age of repletion

If we bear in mind that the condition of the inns gives a pretty good picture of the material civilization prevailing at any time, and that not only the lower classes, but the élite frequented these taverns, we realize that the Germans of the period were still utterly wanting in delicacy and refinement of living. The quantity of food that was consumed, on the other hand, was certainly above that of the present day. We are told, for instance, that workmen in Saxony were specially instructed to enjoy two good meals daily, each consisting of two kinds of meat and two vegetables. A pound of sausages cost a farthing, a pound of beef a halfpenny, while the average daily wage of an ordinary workman was fourpence halfpenny. If in certain districts the poor cannot afford meat for a whole week, it is always commented on with astonishment. Thus we may say generally that the sixteenth century in Germany was the classic age of gluttony and immoderate drinking. Luther himself, we are told, occasionally exceeded in this respect, and evangelicals on the whole had the reputation of being particularly good eaters and drinkers. A dinner given by the Nürnberg doctor Christopher Scheurl in honour of Melanchthon had the following dishes: Pig's head and sirloin with a sharp sauce;

trout and grayling; five partridges, eight other game-birds, and a capon; pike in aspic; wild boar in pepper sauce; cheese-cakes and fruit; pistachio nuts and medicinal syrup; gingerbread and sweets. This mass of fish, pork, fowl, and sweets was consumed by a gathering of only twelve people, who in addition drank as much as five pints of wine apiece. Many of the nobility are said to have been drunk daily, and the same is true of most of the citizens, soldiers, and peasants; while women, even of the highest classes, had a passion for alcohol. Till then weakly brewed beer and thin wine had been enough, but now it was heavy beers and high-grade wines that were fancied. In the middle of the century brandy began to be popular, and even though it was not yet a general drink (being so expensive) it was very eagerly sought after. Societies were founded to enforce moderation, and laws were passed against drunkenness, but without result. We can see what men achieved at their meals from a contemporary description of the Tirolese spas: "At six in the morning, before the bath, poached eggs and cream soup; between seven and eight a dish of eggs or milk pudding, together with wine; at nine you sit down to pancakes and small fish or crabs, with something to drink. Between ten and eleven comes the midday meal, of five to seven courses. A walk till two o'clock and then before the bath a dish of dumplings and a chicken pasty. Between three and four in the afternoon either boiled eggs or a chicken. For the evening meal four or five substantial dishes; at eight, before retiring, a jelly and a dish of wine, with bread, spice, and sugar." In addition there was the afternoon "*Jause*," consisting, according to the same authority, of lettuce and butter, hard-boiled eggs, roast chicken, fish, pancakes, and plenty of wine. These people, therefore, ate almost uninterruptedly, though how they managed to bathe on top of it all is a mystery.

As for what we call morality, there is a certain improvement in comparison with the conditions of the incubation period. Brothels become less common, bath-houses gradually grow obsolete, sexual intercourse is less unbridled and shameless; but these changes are probably due to two causes beyond regular morality, the rise of syphilis and the hypocrisy of Protestantism. Manners, however, are almost coarser than before: it is not unknown even in princely circles for husbands to beat their wives;

the rod plays the most important part in children's education; rudeness and filthiness are the chief constituents in conversation and the forms of social intercourse. Even in castles the fireplace was regularly used as a urinal, and Erasmus warns the reader, in his pamphlet *On Politeness in Society,* to drown the noise of "reaching" by a cough.

The landsknecht style

Costume changes, too, in the North, though the imposing majesty of Italian dress is replaced here by a broad-beamed, ungainly, flat-footed massiveness, by the sort of dignity proper to pedagogues, parsons, and princelets. It is, in fact, no native growth, but an imported and conscious mannerism. People assume the air of having some importance without having any; the naturalness which is the hall-mark of a spiritual and physical nobility is lacking. The Northerner feels his period costume literally as a costume, a wardrobe of theatrical disguises which he wears with an emphatic and exaggerated aplomb, but yet with embarrassment, uncertainty, and a touch of stage-fever. He wants to make it quite clear at any cost what an important part he has to play, but with the result that he is really only playing a part. Almost all the pictures show us this solemn creasing and folding in dress and expression, this boorish decorativeness and Sunday-bestness, and we can see it most definitely in Lucas Cranach's square, puffed-up, pompous figures, posed as if by the suburban photographer.

The "individualism" of the Renaissance expressed itself in the preference for a lighter, more airy dress, in which it was possible to move freely and comfortably. The old over-tight hose which fitted closely to the leg, was replaced by exaggerated pantaloons, which tumbled with their vast masses of stuff from the waist to the shoe; later the stocking, as it were, split off. In footwear we have the same shift from one extreme to the other, and in place of the grotesquely long, turned-up points at the end, we now have the abbreviated wide and blunt "cow-mouths." It is significant that the general standard of fashion was set by the German landsknecht, the coarsest and most unrefined class of the whole period. And with him, too, originated the slitting of clothing which was the chief characteristic of Northern Renaissance costume. Doublet, sleeves, breeches, hats, shoes, all had to be slashed, to reveal the underlying material, which thus became the most important element. In women's attire Protestant prudery asserted itself in the avoidance of bare shoulders and breasts and the extension of the chemise, and later the whole dress, right up to the neck. Both sexes favoured the puff sleeves and the biretta, decorated at first with only a single plume, later with a whole forest of ostrich-feathers. Cloaks and overcoats were most commonly made of satin, velvet, or gold brocade; edging with fur was universal, even with peasants. Humanists, poets, and clergy were usually clean-shaven, while the rest of the world favoured the close-cut beard, the hair well brushed and short. Girls had long plaits, older women covered their hair with a gold net. On the one hand, there is a squareness, exactness, an emphasis on honourableness about the whole attire; on the other, an immoderate complexity and lack of balance; it is the notorious "German Renaissance," which, it will be remembered, celebrated a revival in the seventies and eighties of the last century — this peculiar mixture of the bourgeois and the fantastic, of over-decoration and clumsiness; this life-style made up of twists and turns, of dullness and dreaminess, this finicking, bloated, florid, ornament-loving thing which our grandfathers took to be the basic idea of the Romantic, the fantastic monster which Fischart castigated, and to which Dürer himself, the genius of the age, admitted that he had done too much homage. And indeed it is manifestly his love of complexity and intricacy, thickets and undergrowth, that led him to choose as the subject of his masterpiece the Apocalypse, and to try to translate into the language of visible pictures the most impenetrable book of the Bible, perhaps of all literature. And who but a contemporary and fellow-worker of the German Renaissance could have succeeded in this almost insoluble problem?

Hegemony of craft-art

The whole of German sixteenth-century art is marked by a toy-like and play-room character, a childish and childlike quality; a sort of gingerbread style. The centre of poetry and of sculpture was Nürnberg, which is still the classic home of toys and cakes. A touching Christmas-present effect is common to all the creations of this age; there is no sense of strictness and necessity, moderation and limit, dignity and simplicity, but there is the compensation of a delightful naïveté which elsewhere is in process of vanishing. Art still has the quality of a Christmas-eve celebration, full of mystery and approached with reverence, and it is all the more a fascinating plaything because hand craftsmanship is still its predominant characteristic. For instance, in the " House of the Knight " at Schaffhausen: what child, even today, would not feel it his most passionate wish to be able to possess such a delightfully painted little dwelling?

In all departments of art it is the attitude of the craftsman that predominates, alike in its external and its inner tendency, associated with a love of the trivial, the petty, the bric-à-brac. As we have already said, the greatness of Italian art, even in that High Renaissance, which in our view is a period of decadence, lay in its gift of light-filled composition, its virtuoso's command of proportion, its supreme feeling for rhythm, harmony, measure, and metre. This sense for clear, finely considered, and sharply defined form pervades all expressions of life and art, paintings and clothing, monuments, coins, gestures, and implements. Every cupboard even, every fireplace, every coffer, is at bottom a well-articulated structure. But of the German Renaissance the opposite would be more or less true; even the most monumental and wide-spreading building is thought out on the model of a delicate piece of furniture, an *objet d'art,* or a subordinate detail. In the one case every ornament is architecture, born from an architectural feeling; in the other all architecture is ornamental, born from the passion for ornament. In everything, down to their smallest work, the Italians had a feeling for composition, while the Germans were goldsmiths, filigree-makers, decorative plasterers. Even Dürer is fundamentally a draughtsman and is greatest in the smallest work, in illustrations, etchings, engravings, and odd sketches. Yet never perhaps has craftsmanship produced such well-rounded, subtle, and forceful works; engravers, printers, jewellers, ivory-workers, carpenters, woodworkers, copper-smiths, armourers, are the glory of the age, and all the articles of everyday life bore an æsthetic imprint — fountains, altar-vessels, weather-vanes, gargoyles, candlesticks, railings, even the very cannon, were works of art.

Nor had art yet split off from everyday life as a separate activity. Most of the poets and sculptors had some occupation of consequence as citizens. Lucas Cranach was printer and apothecary, Sebastian Franck a soap-boiler, Hans Sachs a " shoemaker and poet *also*" — poetry being obviously the side-line. All the same, it is a master's ability, craftsmanship in the best sense, that marks all their works and their honest, straightforward decorative printing is wholly in harmony with contemporary work in the plastic art. Every solid, expert piece of work possesses something which rouses our respect and even our wonder. To create a cup, a coat, or a cupboard really well one must have a certain moral quality: respect for the God-created material, self-discipline, devotion to the task, sense of the essential. A master is a fine thing whether he builds a clock or a cathedral; and there can be no doubt that even Hans Sachs's shoes, though none of them have come down to us, were as excellently worked and as universally treasured as his Shrovetide plays.

In music, too, the products are chiefly those of craftsmanship, and what they disclose is not so much original composition as the improvement of musical instruments; at the beginning of the century bassoon and spinet come into use and the invention of the bridge, which makes it possible to use each of the three strings individually, points for the first time to the ultimate significance of the violin.

On the other hand, errors of taste and even gross lack of flair are not infrequent in this craftsmanlike — that is to say, banausic — art. They are displayed in (to name only a few instances) the abuse of language, by wild perversions and mis-shapen innovations, which are meant to be original and effective, but only succeed in being cacophonous and silly; in the aforementioned passion for expressions and similes from the department of excreta, which often becomes mere coprolalia; by the lack of sureness in sensing the relation between form and material (for example, in the transference of metal technique to architectural ornamentation, so that we seem to be looking at plate-work cut in stone); by the coarseness of the allegorical paintings, of which Lucas Cranach's Weimar altar-piece is the most notorious instance, where he himself, standing between Luther and John the Baptist, is smitten by a blood ray from the heart of the crucified Saviour.

The Witches' Hammer

Law too was as barbaric as ever, and superstition had rather gained than lost force through the Reformation. Till then only Jews, Turks, and magicians had been counted as disciples of the Devil, but now the whole world was diabolized: the pope was

Antichrist, every Papist a son of Satan, while Catholics for their part saw in Luther and his adherents the servants of hell. In addition Protestantism had increased the consciousness of sin; no one could know if he was justified. Works were of no value; yet faith was rather an unending task imposed on the human soul than a pillar of certainty. In Calvinism, with its rigid dogma of predestination, no one could say whether he was among the forechosen or among those eternally fore-doomed. Luther used to declare about Doctor Eck, and many more of his opponents, that they had signed a pact with the Devil, and the Breslau Doctor John Cochlæus asserted in his biography of Luther — appearing only three years after his death — that he was the son of the adulterous union of the Devil with Margaret Luther. It is the fashion now to doubt whether Luther ever hurled his ink-bottle at the Devil on the Wartburg, but it is quite obvious from innumerable remarks of his that he pictured the world as full of devils, and in the same way he believed in the Devil's harlots, the witches, whom he cursed and threatened from his pulpit. But in that as in everything else he was only the true son of his times. For just then, when faith in Christian doctrine was riven asunder and began to crumble, there was a recrudescence in the depth of men's souls of an obscure and terrifying undercurrent of paganism.

Belief in witches is to be found among the Persians, in the Old Testament, in Greek and Roman mythology, and in some form perhaps in every religion. In the Middle Ages, however, the burning of witches had been rare: it was then still regarded as human sacrifice, and Charlemagne forbade it. In Italy during the Renaissance there was a special witches' tract at Norcia, which proved attractive to foreigners, and the witch, the *strega,* with her art of *stregheria,* received almost official recognition and was persecuted only in exceptional cases. It was only towards the end of the fifteenth century that this witch-mania, beginning in the Northern lands, became a scourge of humanity. The decisive date is 1487, the year of publication by the two papal inquisitors Henry Institor and Jacob Sprenger of the notorious *Malleus maleficarum;* a work in which witchery, if one may say so, is handled in a spirit of technology and scientific system. In the first part of the work various questions are put, answered, and elaborately discussed, as, for instance: Is there a black art? Does the Devil cooperate with witches? Can men be procreated by incubi (that is, devils who "lie upon" women in the form of men) and succubi (that is, devils who lie under men in the form of women)? Can black magic drive men to love or hate? Can the black art obstruct the marriage act? Can witches treat the *membrum virile* by magic so as to separate it from the body? Can witches turn men into animals? The second part treats more of details; for instance, how witches raise thunder-storms and hail-storms, how they rob cows of their milk, how they make fowls egg-bound, how they produce abortion, how they cause illness in cattle, how they produce frenzy, how they maim limbs by "witches' darts," why they especially love to kill unbaptized children (the answer to this last being that such cannot enter into heaven, and as the kingdom of God and the overthrow of the Devil can only be fulfilled when a definite number of the blessed is in heaven, the murder of newly born children postpones that time).

Witch-mania and psycho-analysis

Witches were assumed to meet on special dates, above all on the eve of May 1, Walpurgis Night, when they flew on broomsticks or he-goats to certain infamous hills, to worship their master by dances and kisses on his genitals or hind quarters (the Devil repaying this court by breaking wind upon them) and then to take their pleasure with devil-lovers in extravagant feasting and wild orgies. The ordeal of witches consisted usually in laying the accused, tightly bound, on the surface of some water and condemning any who remained afloat. Any outstanding quality — good and bad eminence, physical defects and rare beauty, alike — might lead to suspicion of witchcraft. Gradually men became habituated to torturing for a confession, and the vicious circle enclosed them, for, of course, these methods produced numerous proofs of witchcraft, and then increasing fear led to further accusations and trials. Even if avarice and revenge occasionally played some part, there can be no doubt that most of the judges acted in entire honesty, just as a lawyer of today feels himself to be a guardian of law and morality in obtaining the conviction of prisoners for crimes, the punishing of which will seem quite unintelligible to future ages. Protestantism became quite as fanatical as Catholicism (though German historians of a liberal and nationalist tendency like to gloss over the fact), the most blatant instance being probably the learned propaganda work of Graf Hoensbroech, *Das Papsttum in seiner sozial-kulturellen Wirksamkeit* (*The Papacy in its Sociological Aspect*), in which the misdeeds of the Roman Inquisition are treated at great length and in the sternest spirit of description; while there is not a word about the Protestant persecution of witches. The fact is that it was a universal disease of the time, common to the learned and the lower classes, to papists and reformers, princes and subjects, accusers and inquisitors, not to mention the witches themselves, for many of the victims believed themselves guilty. Even a genius of the quality of Kepler, who can hardly be said to have lacked the gift of scientific thought, maintained that it was impossible to deny witchcraft, and it was a serious enough matter for him, for one of his relatives was burnt as a witch, and his mother was many times in danger of the same fate. The whole question of witchcraft is probably the result of a mass-psychosis due to repressed sexuality, manifesting itself in the form of gynophobia; and psychoanalysis, which so often occupies itself with unprofitable trivialities, might do well to investigate the whole problem to its foundations, for it would find valuable hints in the *Witches' Hammer*. The question why the black art is more widespread among women than men is answered as follows: " What is woman other than the ruin of friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary disaster, a fascinating evil, a natural temptation, a domestic peril, a desirable danger, a universal evil in fine colours? " What emerges here is that deep fear of man in face of his mysterious companion, the appalling sensation of the unavoidable sinfulness and unseen corruption that lies at the back of sexual intercourse, the dark fearful maelstrom which blindly and eagerly gathers into itself all the many deeds and miseries, dreams and passions, of erring humanity. From the witch-madness of the Reformation period it is a long line, but a straight line, that leads to Strindberg. It is clear from the few quotations from the *Malleus* which we have given that the problem was not a religious, but a sexual one under religious disguise; in most of them we see a subterranean fantasy, completely unrestrained and emphasized by its religious veneer of sexual unsatisfaction or impotence, satyriasis or perversity. This effusion of sex-hatred in such dreadful and grotesque forms was one of the consequences of the much-lauded " liberation of the individual " by the Renaissance and Reformation.

Secularization of humanity

In conclusion we must answer the question as a whole: What, then, taking all in all, must we conclude was the importance of the Reformation for European civilization? It signifies no more, no less, than the attempted secularization of all the life, thought, and faith of mankind. It introduces into all spheres a superficial practicality, a dull utilitarianism, material, gloomy, insipid, ordinary; in its futile, short-sighted rationalism it denied, deliberately and intentionally, a whole set of higher activities which had hitherto flowed from religion and which from the mere standpoint of practical efficiency may be hard to justify — for instance, " barren " asceticism, not merely the asceticism that flees from the world and hates it, but its highest form, the *franchise of the universe;* " unnatural " celibacy, " meaningless " pilgrimages, " superfluous " splendour of ceremonial, " useless " monasteries, " ridiculous " carnivals, " waste of time " in feast-days, " superstitious " adoration of the saints, who had accompanied man through the daily round, shedding light about him and helping him as God's friendly staff of assistants; " unjustifiable " charity to the poor, which gives for the sake of giving, without inquiring too much about worthiness and need. All childlike qualities vanish from life, which becomes logical, systematic, just, and efficient, or, in other words, unendurable.

It must be repeated that to many, though not to all, of these things Luther's attitude was still mediæval. His greatness, in fact, lay precisely in this, that he always felt the Reformation as something religious, never political, social, or " organizatory." It must be admitted, all the same, that partly through pressure of popular opinion, partly through his stubborn opposition on principle to anything Catholic, he approved or at least admitted all these changes.

The Reformation in the first place sanctifies *work;* in the second, a man's profession and thus indirectly the *money* which proceeds therefrom; thirdly, marriage and the *family;* lastly, the *State*. Superficially, it put the last of these lower than the Middle Ages had done, by splitting State from Church, but this actually made it more important, because the State gained thereby a basis of its own for its sovereignty. *Exemption* — that is, *emancipation* of State from Church — thus created that scourge of the modern age, the supreme State, which has a fiscal system to claim the citizen's property, an omnipresent police system to restrict his liberty, and a militarism to demand his life. There can be no doubt that the clear distinction between temporals and spirituals which Luther aimed at was intended to emancipate religion; but the opposite resulted, for while Protestant rulers got away from the dominion of the pope, they regarded themselves as masters of the churches in their own land and behaved, as guardians of their subjects, in exactly the same way as Rome had done. But instead of one vicar of Christ who prescribes to men their relation to God, there were now several such vicars, far less competent and, by reason of their more limited sphere of action, far less responsible. That was the whole difference. In the most flagrant opposition to the tendency that had begotten it Protestantism, in almost all the countries in which it was victorious, developed a system of the stiffest intolerance, which grew up out of the preferential treatment accorded to the State's Church; for the State — from its very nature — is the most intolerant creation there can be.

As for marriage, Luther regarded it as a mere concession to the flesh and obviously did not set any high value on it. He himself married, not from any real internal compulsion, but to set a liberal example and to annoy the Catholics; it is illuminating that he chose a nun for his wife. But in the simple Kate he was marrying, emphatically, nothing but a housekeeper; indeed, this was his real view of women: "If we had not this race of women, the household economy and everything concerned with it would simply fall to pieces." On the other hand, in 1521, in the middle of his fight for the faith, he writes enthusiastically about the rise of crassly material culture which marked the period: "Whoever reads these chronicles will find that from the birth of Christ on, the whole story of the world in these hundreds of years is unparalleled, in every way. Such building and planting have never been in the whole world, such fine and varied eating and drinking never so common as they are now. Clothing, too, has become so splendid that it cannot become finer. Who, moreover, has ever seen such trading as now journeys round and swallows up the whole world?" There is, in fact, *a priori,* a subterranean relationship between the Protestant and the Capitalist attitudes to things, though it only comes right to the surface in English Puritanism. The spiritual father of this union of Bourse and Bible was Calvin, who bitterly opposed the canonical veto of usury; even Luther had said in answer to questioning on this point that " a bit of usury " was permissible.

Luther too, as Hans Sperber has pointed out, is responsible for the change in the meaning of the word " *Beruf* " (profession, vocation), which until his day really meant a " calling "; it is in his works that it has for the first time its present-day meaning of manual and specialized occupation, and he saw in the practice of industrial occupations — which the Classical age had regarded as degrading and banausic, and the Middle Ages as profane and ungodly — a divine moral mission. Till his day work had been regarded as a penalty, at best a necessary evil; but henceforward it is elevated and even sanctified. This attitude, first brought into the world by Protestantism, leads in a direct line to Capitalism *and* Marxism, the two most powerful darkeners of Europe, each of which, though with contradictory aims, has *the same* ethical and social foundations as the other.

The anti-evangelical Evangelical

It is very noteworthy that the Reformation, which professed to be a return to the pure word of the Bible, was in all these points in the sharpest opposition to the Bible. At the very beginning of the Old Testament the Lord said to Adam: " Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying: 'Thou shalt not eat of it,' cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Of the holiness and blessedness of work there is not a word here; rather, Adam is cursed to work, the worst punishment which God, who is still a God of vengeance, could conceive for the sin of the first man. The New Testament teaches in almost every line the blessedness and godliness of doing nothing. Christ Himself never did any work, nor His apostles and companions; Peter and Matthew were taken away from their work — in fact, their Master warns them specifically against work: " Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Jesus and the "social question"

This explains with perfect clearness the attitude which Jesus took to the "social question." It is true that He preferred the poor to the rich and said that a rich man could not enter the kingdom of Heaven; but this saying has no socialistic application. The poor are more likely to enter the kingdom of Heaven than the rich because the conditions for a godly life, turned away from Mammon, are more favourable in them. A rich man, whether he means it or not, must occupy himself with his earthly goods, while the poor man is in the fortunate position of not owning things which might turn him from God. Socialism, on the contrary, aims at gradually putting the poor into the advantageous place at present occupied by the rich and insists that every man, rich or poor, should work. But Jesus sets before man the example of the lilies in the field and the sparrows on the housetop, for He knows that in the blessing of work a secret curse lies hidden, the greed of gold, of power and materialism. Socialism aims at making the poor rich, Jesus aims to make the rich poor. Socialism *envies* the rich, Jesus *pities* them. Socialism aims at the largest number of workers and possessors possible, Jesus looks to an ideal state when no one works or owns anything. Thus Jesus' attitude to the social question is that He simply disregards it: to Him things like the distribution of wealth, property, the just ordering of industrial conditions, are what the Stoics called an "*adiaphoron*" and the mathematicians a "*quantité négligeable*": they do not concern Him. His mission as He sees it is to lead man to the divine, while the mind of a social reformer is ever set on this world. Hence it is the greatest blasphemy against Christ that is possible, to put Him on a level with those dwarf-souls that want to redeem man by *economic* means; He differs from them all, not in degree, but in kind. His good deeds were spiritual, not material, and it is as little reasonable to compare Him with such people as to compare, say, the creations of Plato or Dante with those of Marconi or Edison. Jesus never strove against the powers which are the target in modern social polemics, such as the bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, capitalism, and the like, because these things were all far too indifferent to Him. His one enemy was the devil in man, materialism. Our enlightened age does not believe in the Devil, because it has fallen so near to him that it can no longer see him, and the " spirit " of materialism is as predominant among the poor as among the rich. The rich have wealth, the poor not yet; but wealth is, in the one case as in the other, the essential aim. Jesus would no longer be able to say: " Blessed are the poor," since today the poor are as unblessed as the rich — thanks to the socialistic theories which the degenerate superficiality of our days has read into His sayings.

Similar is Jesus' attitude to the State. He said, it is true: " Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," but the command arises from a deep contempt for the earth and all earthly ordinances. He recommends the placid payment of taxes because it is not worth while to refuse, for the children of God are concerned with other and higher things than such mean political arrangements. Only an ear very insensitive to shades and undertones could miss the bitter irony with which Jesus speaks whenever He touches these questions. There is an equally ironical note in His answer to Pilate's question: " Art Thou the king of the Jews? ": " Thou sayest it." Obviously He feels it unworthy of Himself to discuss such miserable misunderstanding at all; according to John, however, He does explain to the governor, briefly, that He is in truth a king — but a very different one from any that the vulgar understanding of the Jewish hierarchy can conceive.

The consistent attitude of Christ is simply that He regards everything created by man as insignificant to the point of ridiculousness. That, too, is His view of marriage and the family; or, more accurately, he rejects them both, but ever in the same mild, tolerant tone which points to the right path as an ideal for all without wishing to enforce it on those who are not ripe for it. The words of Jesus to His mother: " Woman, what is there between me and thee? " spoken more in astonishment than in anger, is an appalling source of confusion to the ordinary theologian, who passes it by with a few meaningless platitudes. When He is told that His mother and brethren seek to speak with Him, He answers, according to Matthew: " Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? " and, stretching His hand towards His disciples: " See here my mother and my brothers." Equally clear is His warning: " Whoever comes to me and hates not father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

To every one of us who can read them with sound reason and unconfused sensibility, the Gospels are quite unambiguous as to the true Christian view of all these things. Ministers, who do not fall short of the rabbis in Talmudism, naturally try to turn all these expressions, to rub them down and comment them into meaning their opposite: and, in fact, it is possible to read into the Bible what one will, if one lacks the necessary honesty and simplicity. Thus Bernhardi, one of the finest writers on strategy, but not on the same level as an interpreter of the Bible, tried to prove in one of his works that Christ had preached war, for He said: " I am come to bring not peace, but a sword " — an assertion hardly worth the pains of answering.

God and the soul

God and the soul are the only realities, and the world is the unreal — that is the " glad tidings " of Jesus. True Christianity never tries to perfect the world, either socially, politically, or economically, or even morally; for it grants it no validity — indeed, does not notice it at all. A justly ordered society, a life adjusted to the " general good " — these and similar ideals have nothing to do with the saving of the soul. This is the fundamental difference between Christianity and the two other monotheistic religions; it is neither superficially organizatory like Jewish morality, nor barbarically world-conquering like Islam; it is not the amelioration of the world in any way, be it never so noble or prudent, but liberation from the world with all its evil *and* good, harmful *and* beneficent forces. It concerns itself always with the individual soul, never with general well-being, progress, success of the species, and suchlike lower things. If we judge the Reformation, then, without prejudice, not as to what it aimed at in theory, but as to what it became in actual fact and historical reality, we must admit that it signified a relapse into the two other monotheistic creeds: in Lutheranism it became Mosaic morality, in Puritanism Mohammedan imperialism, and thus represents, in its two chief forms, the absolute reversal and negation of the original meaning of Christian gospel. For this had no purpose of reforming anything: there was no room in it for so shallow an idea. The Reformation is nothing but a deeply irreligious attempt to renew religion — though it is fair to add that in this it only followed the trend of the times — and therefore could do nothing else but move away from real religion. Even the Counter-Reformation is only an attempt to re-Catholicize the world by the same instruments as those which Protestantism employed. The "pagan" Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation have all the same basic meaning: they lead away from God.

Holy idleness

The consecration of earthly life which was accomplished by the Reformation was, in its way, undeniably an act of liberation, but it was to an equal degree a desecration, futilization, and emptying. The sanctification of everyday life, lock, stock, and barrel, leaves no room for the noble, sublime, even heroic dualism which was the essential idea of the Middle Ages. Such a religious attitude, if we disregard the great personal piety of its founder, is in obvious danger of ending in Philistinism, of becoming the favourite creed of the bourgeoisie, which in the name of God and to the honour of God mines coal, begets children, and draws up balance-sheets. The greater truth that State, economics, profession, industry, society, and family are unholy things is likely to vanish from sight. And it did so vanish in fact.

There is an old Jewish story, not included in the Bible, according to which not only Cain, but his brother Abel also roused the ill-will of God, "for he beheld the glory of God more than was lawful" in idle contemplation. The God of the Jews, quite naturally, was jealous, but at bottom Abel was the first poet and also the first "*homo religiosus*." The Christian answer, at any rate, to the question of which is better, action or contemplation, work or idleness, is answered clearly in the story of Martha and Mary. Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to His words, but Martha was dragged away by many occupations. And she said to the Lord: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath let me serve alone? Bid her, therefore, to help me." But the Lord said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

All work has the great drawback that it diverts man, divides him, separates him from himself. Therefore all saints, founders of religion, all men who stood very near to God, were wont to flee into the solitude. What did they there? Nothing. But this doing nothing contained far more life and inner activity than all the doings of others. The greatest man is always he who can be a mirror — no trembling, clouded, ever-moving mirror, but a clear, clean, quiet one which can take all the divine light to itself. Blessed are the idle, for they shall see the glory of God; blessed are the hours of idleness, for in them our soul is at work.

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CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

> *" The truth is: we must be miserable and are. But the chief source of this vital ill which assails mankind is man himself: " homo homini lupus." We mark this last clearly, we see the world as a hell, which surpasses Dante's hell in that each man must be the Devil to his neighbour."*
>
> *Schopenhauer*

The earthly hell

We approach the blackest period of the European modern age, the period from the sixteenth century to the Thirty Years' War, the time of the Wars of Religion, a Night of St. Bartholomew drawn out to almost a hundred years. If Christianity and war are in any case an irresolvable contradiction, the most grotesque climax of this fearful paradox, which has defiled the whole history of Christianity, was attained in a deceitfulness, cruelty, and insolence towards all laws of God and man, such as was never surpassed by Tartars and Turks, Huns and Hottentots. For in these it is only a blind passion for destruction, but in the Christians of the Counter-Reformation age it is a complex system built on a basis of high intellectual refinement and a perfected technique of villainy. For three generations the most highly developed and civilized countries of Europe vied with each other in inhumanity and wallowed in a merciless passion for vengeance, a tricky viciousness, and every devilish instinct that the Saviour had taken up His cross to destroy.

Of the two parties, however, it must be admitted that the Catholics were the worse in blackness. In the last chapter we have learnt something of the weaknesses and limitations of Protestantism and came to the conclusion that it was by no means (as it is so often confidently assumed) the definitely higher and more progressive form of Christian faith; but rather that, in many aspects, it actually represented a retrogression, as it became shallower, more material, and further removed from the original doctrine of Christ. But in the opening period of the Counter-Reformation the opposite is the case; reason, morality, conscience, freedom, enlightenment, are all on the side of the heretics. Yet, even so, only relatively: since there is no question on either side of any real morality, spiritual reverence, sense of responsibility, or even freedom of thought.

For politics, by their very nature, are inseparable from lies, stains, brutality, and selfishness, and at this time political degradation had reached its most appalling climax. Everywhere — in Spain, Italy, France, England, Scotland — we come upon masterpieces of callous villainy at the head of public affairs, unfeeling mass-murderers, having the ferocity of primitive man, but having also an icy calculating power, and thus deeper far in vileness than he. Alba is but the most comprehensive type for hundreds of similar moral abortions, who suddenly appeared like some poisonous plant to pollute the soil of Europe. Even in the glorious England of Elizabeth the higher strata of society swarmed with hypocritical, greedy brigands who stopped at no crime if it satisfied their thirst for power or possessions. The split in the Church had, on the whole, produced only negative results; it had merely shaken the faith in the authority of the divine canons, while as yet only a few enlightened minds saw glimmerings of a new ethic, founded on secular considerations of reason and fitness, which might take the place of the mediæval.

The counterstroke

It is only with the Religious Peace of Augsburg, in 1555, which is quite unworthy of its title, that religious fanaticism let loose its destructive forces in full blast in both the camps. Indeed, the terms of the treaty contained the seeds of countless disputes and complications. The formula of "*cuius regio, eius religio,*" which conferred upon the ruler of the land the freedom to choose its religion and denied to others such freedom for themselves, was an appalling violation of the conscience of every subject, while the famous "*reservatum ecclesiasticum,*" which declared that all ecclesiastical lords of the Empire who went over to Protestantism were to be deprived of office, lands, and revenues, led immediately upon its promulgation to embittered disputes and counter-declarations. Calvinists, moreover, were not included in the settlement at all, so that there were now *three* official religious parties, each struggling fiercely with the others.

The Reformed Church was already more or less the official State religion in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, England, Scotland, Holland, North Germany, and the lands of the Teutonic Order; in Western Germany and the hereditary provinces of Austria, in Poland and Hungary, in Bavaria and Bohemia, it was, whether openly or secretly, the dominant faith, and all signs pointed to its victory in France and Italy as well. Everywhere, in the bishoprics, the States of the Church, and even arch-clerical Spain, there were small groups of fiery Protestants. But nowhere, even in the most papist of lands, were there anything but lukewarm Catholics. The reformation of the whole of Europe seemed only a matter of time.

But precisely at this moment the Counter-Reformation got under way. Until then the Roman Church had been, on matters of religion, either wholly indifferent, or herself inclined to the Reform, or else swayed by purely political motives. It had been far more important for the Curia to prevent the house of Habsburg from becoming too powerful than to check the spread of some trivial heresy, which, so most people thought, would be as easily suppressible or assimilable as its predecessors; and thus on several occasions the remarkable spectacle was presented of the Pope using the Protestant movement, which was politically also a centrifugal agitation, as an instrument against the Emperor. Now, however, the enormous danger began to be realized, and Rome proved that she was still the strongest centre of force in Europe.

The system devised by the Church to hold back the Reformation movement was cleverly and ingeniously contrived, but was very ticklish and complicated to manage and therefore required leaders of unusual tact, insight, and power of judging men. And, in fact, such men were soon found. The plan, on the one hand, was to formulate the lines of belief with a hitherto unheard-of rigour, thus preventing any possibility of a gradual lapse into heresy; and, on the other, to secure within these limits the greatest elasticity, laxity, and modernness, so that freer impulses and demands suited to the time were not denied satisfaction.

The Council of Trent

This clear definition of dogma was achieved in the first instance by the Council of Trent, which declared the right of the Church to the sole interpretation of the Bible, thus removing the root of heresy. On the difficult question of justification a half-way position was adopted between Augustinianism and Semi-Pelagianism: good works are necessary, but are made meritorious only by the grace of God. On the doctrine of the sacraments the full seven were strictly retained, on the ground that they had been instituted by Christ — any concessions on this point would have been dangerous. Similarly on the mass and transubstantiation the strictly orthodox standpoint was adhered to. The abuses of absolution were admitted and censured, but its redeeming efficacy was reaffirmed. On the whole, then, the Council of Trent is less an original codification of Catholic doctrine than an exact demarcation of frontiers between it and the new (especially the Lutheran) heresy. It is definite only in what it rejects; in its positive achievements it is obviously — and entirely of intention — uncertain, ambiguous, faulty, elastic. Catholicism thus received an odour of arbitrariness and casuistry, it became pseudo-moral and secular; but at the same time it took on a character of liberality and suppleness, of accommodation to and friendliness towards the world, which it had hitherto not had.

Pan-European intolerance

In any case the strict line which was now drawn between orthodoxy and heterodoxy was the signal for a militant and aggressive policy of reconquest to assert itself; and this date in fact marked the birth of a universal intolerance, exclusive and hate-inspired, such as had been seen but rarely in the first half of the century. Yet the Council was not the cause, rather it was one of the symptoms, of a general psychosis which was spreading to the adherents of all other creeds as well.

As for Calvinism, it was compelled — if only by the extreme rigour with which it divided the world, through Predestination, into the elect and the damned — to deny all other creeds even the right to live. But the Lutherans too were zealous enough in their efforts to develop a system of the stiffest intolerance. Their dogmatic struggles were all the more ridiculous because they neither possessed nor, by their very nature, could possess any firm dogma. Melanchthon's last words are said to have been a thanksgiving for his escape from the "*rabies theologorum*"; for even in his lifetime the Protestants had already split into orthodox Lutherans and Melanchthonians, who under the name of *Philippists* (as they were called after Melanchthon's Christian name) were persecuted in Saxony as "Crypto-Calvinists," expelled from their offices, and not seldom banished or imprisoned. The sole guide of faith became the "concordance formula," a collection of anti-Philippist clauses which satisfied none and only occasioned fresh absurd disputes, so that it received the nickname of the "discordance formula." In the Palatinate, on the other hand, the "Heidelberg Catechism" set up Calvinism, and every preacher who refused to accept it was driven from the land. Yet even the Electorate of Saxony had no real solid basis of Lutheranism, for a change of ruler destroyed the "concordance" formulæ and by the agency of the chancellor, Nicolas Crell, Philippism was set in their place. The succeeding regent, however, preferred the Lutheran creed; Crell was imprisoned and, after years of intrigue by his enemies (who went even to Catholics for support), beheaded. In the Palatinate such an official change of religion occurred four times, accompanied of course by incessant trickery and persecution of the unorthodox. It was not surprising, then, that clear-sighted men of the time said that the Reformation had introduced a more cruel tyranny of faith than had ever been known under the Papacy.

Starting from Poland, established by Lælius and Faustus Sozzini, codified in the Catechism of Rakowa, *Socinianism* had some success. It was decidedly anti-Trinitarian, whence its adherents also called themselves Unitarians. They taught that Christ had not died for the sins of the world, but had only established a new morality and set up an example of the moral life. The Father alone, according to them, was God, and He raised his Son, after death, to the divine dignity as reward for his purity and obedience; and hence it was justifiable and even necessary to pray to both. Baptism and Communion they declared to be useful, but not absolutely necessary, institutions. Traditional doctrines of justification were refuted by an ingenious, though superficial, proof of the elder Sozzini, which has often been repeated since — Christ could not have suffered as the representative of the whole of humanity, since it is only possible to represent those over whom one has complete authority, but it was quite impossible for future generations to give Christ such authority; and, moreover, only money debts were transferable, not moral guilt and punishment. This purely juristic deduction was taken over by the famous legal scholar Hugo Grotius, though it is entirely without validity, since the juristic and the theological planes are wholly distinct from one another. But the mere possibility of such argument emphasizes the evil consequences of the rationalization of the idea of punishment, which Paul derived partly from the ideas of Roman penal law, partly from Talmudic-dialectic analogies of his own age.

Related to the Socinians and to Grotius were the *Arminians* or Remonstrants in Holland, who were opposed by the *Gomarians* or Contra-remonstrants. The original issue was the doctrine of predestination: Jacob Arminius and his followers declared that it referred to faith, since God in His all-wisdom had foreseen in each individual whether he would possess the faith or not; the Gomarians, on the other hand, attaching themselves to Francis Gomarus, asserted that the election was primary and faith only its effect. A man of ordinary common sense might fail to see the unbridgeable gulf between these two interpretations; yet for such dark controversies thousands were cruelly persecuted, an eminent statesman like Oldenbarneveldt executed, and Grotius condemned to imprisonment for life — though he had the luck to escape. Such was the manner of theological dispute, even in the Netherlands, which were rightly famed as the freest land in Europe.

Anglicanism

In England, also, the result of the Reformation was a triple division of the Church. When Henry VIII refused obedience to the pope — partly in order to seize the wealth of the Church, partly to have freedom to indulge his sadistic Bluebeard passions — he did not touch the Catholic hierarchy, or the Church dogmas and institutions, but merely changed the apex of the pyramid by putting himself in the place of the pope and demanding the oath of supremacy from all clerics, who thus recognized him as their sovereign. Out of this developed the remarkable form of the Anglican or High Church, a Lutheranism with bishops and prelates, auricular confession and celibacy, a Catholicism without pope and Peter's pence, monastic orders and monasteries. It was inevitable, with so absurd and frivolous a sort of reform, that anyone with real religious convictions must expose himself to persecution. If he was a faithful Catholic, who clung to the Pope and regarded the later marriages of the King as adulterous, he was beheaded for treason; if he was an honest Protestant, denying the value of ceremonial and permitting the marriage of priests, he was hanged for sacrilege; if he was a strict Calvinist, who denied the transformation of the bread, he was burnt as a heretic. The result, therefore, of this arbitrary creation of the High Church was not merely that in the domain of the English Crown, and especially in Ireland, Catholicism held its own with particular obstinacy, but also that Protestant doctrine retained a remarkable purity as, in fact, the very name of "Puritan" indicates. The chief centre of the latter was in Scotland, where the fanatical, rigidly moralistic John Knox founded a Church which was based purely on government by its own elders, for which reason contemporaries named it the *Presbyterian;* later, from their opposition to the official Church, its members came to be called dissenters or nonconformists, and, from the alliance formed to protect their faith, Covenanters; finally, owing to the complete independence of Church and State, which they claimed for every community, the *Independents,* though the last name is generally reserved for a particularly radical group of Puritans.

Natural law

Europe, in short, becomes a gigantic battlefield of warring Church parties, and community-feelings of every other sort were swallowed up by the religious, or more accurately the theological, interest, a condition which Macaulay has well described as the replacement of physical frontiers by moral. The political position of each individual was decided, not by the State to which he belonged, nor by his race, language, or family, but simply by the creed he professed. The Guises and their adherents behaved as traitors to France by conspiring with Spain; the Huguenots equally so by secretly plotting with Germany. The Scottish Catholics sought help in France, the reformed provinces of the Netherlands called in the English. The papist subjects of Elizabeth hoped for the victory of the Spanish Armada, and the Puritan subjects of Mary Stuart for an English invasion. German Protestants surrendered the bishoprics of Lorraine to the hereditary foe France, and French Protestants ceded Havre to the hereditary foe England. In close connexion with all this, there arose new political theories, of which the chief were those of Jean Bodin, John Althusius, and Hugo Grotius. It was the last-named who originated the idea of "natural law," which was the obsession of Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Law and State, according to Grotius, do not rest on the direct institution of God, but are the work of man, having their origin in our reasonable natural disposition, our impulse to self-preservation, and our gregarious interest. Althusius pictured the origin of the State on similar lines: first the family, then the clan, later the communities, then again provinces, and finally the State, which consists not of an aggregate of individuals, but of a sum of corporations, so that sovereignty in the State can belong only to the corporations, the people ordered in their classes; this is the famous doctrine of popular sovereignty which had such enormous influence. Even Bodin, who was still a supporter of absolutism, limited the sovereignty of the monarch by religion and morality. And it was this that was, so to say, the topical feature of all contemporary theory, the springboard from which the "*monarchomachoi*" took off in fighting the princes, and the ground of their assertion that governmental interference with the religion of its subjects was inadmissible, that "*cuius regio, eius religio*" was both an illegal and an immoral rule. The monarch has his power simply from the people, who have handed it to him under contract (the "commission theory"), and if he exceeds his privileges, especially by violation of the free consciences of his subjects, the contract may be cancelled at any moment, since in such cases the people had the "*ius resistendi,*" the right to resist, the right to depose the tyrant and, if he refuses voluntary abdication, to kill him. But those who carried the theory into practice were Jacob Clément, who struck down Henry III; François Ravaillac, who stabbed Henry IV; Balthasar Gérard, who shot William of Orange; John Savage and Antony Babington, with their many-branched conspiracies against Elizabeth; and the members of the Gunpowder Plot, who nearly blew James I, his family, and the whole of Parliament into the air. It is worth remarking that all those mentioned were fanatical Catholics.

The army of Jesus

The blame for advocating and inspiring these and similar misdeeds has often been put upon the Jesuits; and indeed their doctrines, to say the least, admitted of considerable misconstruction about the permissibility of political murder. Before the Gunpowder plotters made their plans, they asked the approval of an important Jesuit and received the answer that in so undoubtedly noble an aim the death of a few innocents could be forgiven. Still, such ideas were in keeping with the spirit of the time. Jacob Clément was a Dominican, and he, too, asked his superior whether it was a deadly sin for a priest to slay a tyrant, and received the answer that in such a case the priest would be guilty only of an irregularity. Even the Huguenot preachers to whom Poltrot de Méré, the murderer of François de Guise, divulged his plan, went no further than to urge him to consider if he was not risking the salvation of his soul.

The Order of the Jesuits is one of the most remarkable creations in world-history, uniting in itself all the contradictions of the age of transition, with its violence and its spirituality, its bigotry and its crime; and the age gave it its colour. Its founder, Ignatius Loyola, like his great opponent Luther, was really a product of the Middle Ages, a mixture of the bold knight and the ecstatic saint. His essential quality was a sublime unworldly dreaminess, which was the very means by which he overcame half Europe, for his ecstatic fancy was more powerful than reality and subdued it. The central idea which dominated the whole of his life was the conviction that the spirit was sovereign, and our human nature a mere instrument on which, if it had the will and the self-discipline, the spirit could play as it liked: that if it were sufficiently sincere in its resolve, it could transform the whole world to its own image; in short, that the soul is more powerful than matter. Loyola began his career as a handsome, amorous courtier, a splendid and fearless officer; at the siege of Pamplona, during one of his reckless fights, his left foot and both legs were broken by a huge stone. An unskilled surgeon set one leg so badly that it had to be broken a second time; it was always shorter than the other, and for months he was compelled to have heavy weights attached in order to stretch it. During these agonies there awoke in him the longing and the will to become a martyr of the Catholic Church and, as soon as he had practically recovered, he made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The money for the journey which his brother gave him he divided among the poor; on board ship he preached sermons on repentance, amidst the ridicule of the rough sailors. He scourged himself three times a day and spent seven hours in prayer, his food was bread and water, and his bed the bare deck. On his return to Spain he became a wandering preacher and acquired a large following. But he realized that to lead men he needed knowledge, and thus in his thirty-third year, with great labour, he learnt Latin and passed through the University of Alcalá. An association of some pious students led to the first beginnings of the *Compañía de Jesús,* which was solemnly confirmed by the pope in 1540.

Its very name declared its character as an organization built on military lines. At its head was the general of the order, answerable to none but the pope; next to him came the provincial generals and thence numerous degrees down to the ordinary soldier. Specially important was the strict prohibition excluding the Jesuits from all official positions and dignities, for in this way their forces were concentrated wholly on the service of the order. The chief oath that had to be taken was that of obedience: "As in the spheres of heaven, by eternal laws, the lower circle follows the higher in its course, so the subordinate organism must be dependent on the nod of the higher." The principle of subordination was insisted on with the same even-handed rigour as in an army, and in training and control brought blind obedience to superiors to a point where man was but a piece of wood or flesh. This was the famous "obedience of corpses." As a hardening for these and other tests of the will Loyola devised his "*exercitia spiritualia militaria,*" that artificial engine of training for the control and regulation of passions and feelings, even of imagination and memory, which K. L. Schleich has compared to Prussian drill — and not altogether unjustly, though Jesuitism is, of course, far more a drill of soul than of body.

The iniquity of Jesuitism

On the other hand, this order, which made all its members into uniform and impersonal instruments, showed an amazing efficiency in individualizing tasks according to the individual's natural gifts and in always putting him at the point where he would be of the most service and would have the richest opportunity for unfolding his powers and tendencies. This virtuoso-technique in the utilization of human material is the reason for the contradictory opinions that have been held at all times about Jesuitism. The truth is that all are right, for the Jesuits are no simple phenomenon, but as many-sided, adaptable, and multiform as human nature itself. They have done much good, much evil, much that was beneficial, much that was destructive; but whatever they accomplished they did with the maximum of efficiency. They were the finest cavaliers and the strictest ascetics, the most self-sacrificing missionaries and the most efficient merchants, the loyalest servants and the coolest statesmen, the wisest shepherds of souls, the most artistic theatrical producers, the finest doctors, and the most efficient murderers. They built churches and factories, carried on pilgrimages and conspiracies; developed the formulæ of mathematics and religion; suppressed freedom of research while they themselves made a number of important discoveries; propagated in their writings the purest form of Christianity and yet allowed the Indians still to pray to their own gods under the name of Christ; saved the Indians in Paraguay from the violence and destructiveness of the Spaniards, while they incited the Paris mob to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. They were, in the widest sense of the phrase, capable of anything. But they were still more irresistible and uncanny through their mysterious ubiquity than on account of their protean gifts. They were literally everywhere. It was impossible to say with complete certainty whether anyone was a Jesuit or, at any rate, under Jesuit influence. No position on earth was too high, none too low, for them. They were to be found in the filthiest hovels as in the cabinets of princes; their missions extended even to Japan and China. But their greatest skill was in the use of the three most powerful influences of the time, the pulpit, the confessional, and the school. In their sermons they managed to unite dignity with pleasantness, seriousness with a sense of actualities; their books of instruction surpassed all others in lucidity, clearness, and vividness. Their schools were famed the world over, and their teachers were unrivalled for intelligence, patience, knowledge, and stimulating power; at the universities too they had distinguished representatives in the most varied faculties. "When I see what this order has achieved," said Bacon, "in the education, in the development of character as of learning, I think of what Agesilaus said to Pharnabazus: 'When I see you are what you are, I could wish you were of us.'" As father-confessors they exhibited a most remarkable ability to satisfy every wish and need as the case demanded; they could be strict and pious, or they could gloss over the worst crimes with understanding forgiveness, provided they could thereby maintain the key position of the father-confessor.

Their practice in the confessional was the source of a system which under the name of Jesuitism has achieved an unenviable notoriety, the system of quibbling, glossing, twisting, and casuistry. The saying that the end justifies the means is not indeed to be found in any actual Jesuit writing, but much of their teaching came perilously near it. In their first law it was laid down that no member can be obliged to any act which involves mortal sin; but the exception follows at once: "unless it is ordered by the superiors in the name of Jesus Christ," which practically made the first clause ineffective. By the doctrine that in every action it is only the "*intentio*" that signifies (so that forbidden deeds are justifiable if done with good intentions), as well as by the notorious "secret reservation," which was admitted in oaths, witnesses, and promises, the foundation was laid for that worldly Christianity of unscrupulousness and sophistry which culminates in the doctrine of probabilism — the doctrine which permits anything for which "probable" grounds can be given. Moreover, unfortunately for themselves, the Jesuits had in Pascal an opponent who was the deepest thinker and most brilliant writer of the Baroque, who could not only gather together the objections to their system, but present them with annihilating clearness and completeness in such a masterpiece of creative irony as the *Provincial Letters*. Taking all in all, no impartial judge can deny that Jesuitism was founded and swept along by the noblest and most altruistic devotion to a great idea; but from the beginning there was a seed of poison, that, while deadly to its opponents, was deadly also to itself. It had been forgotten that lying is nowhere and never permissible, even "to the glory of God"; in fact, there least of all.

Philip II

While the Jesuits were carrying on mine-warfare against the Reformation over all Europe, Philip II fought it openly and with brute violence. It is a fair question whether this king was to some extent unsound of mind; his son Don Carlos certainly was, as well as his grandmother Johanna the Mad, the first queen of united Spain. Certainly the Habsburg psychosis of which we have spoken appears in him with a particular rawness of form. His life was dominated by one obsession, the complete restoration of the universal Church of Rome and the expansion of Spanish absolutism over the whole world. To this end he devoted every moment of his reign of more than forty years, unhesitatingly sacrificing everything which it lay within his power to sacrifice: ships, money, lands, men, the Spanish blood of his soldiers and the Flemish blood of his heretics, the peace of his neighbours and the well-being of his subjects. And at the close of his life he saw not a single one of his ambitions any nearer to realization, the forces which he had spent his life in combating all rising to victory, himself in poverty and hated, powerless, and lamed by gout; and the sun, which rose and set within his empire, shining on nothing but misery and decay.

The character of Philip displayed all the qualities of the Habsburgs and all the qualities of the Spaniards in the strongest, yet absurdest, combination. The Spanish hidalgos were bigoted, but Philip was fanatical; they were unhesitating and brutal, Philip's path was over corpses; they considered themselves as higher beings, Philip thought himself a god; they were exclusive, Philip inaccessible: they kept themselves in obscurity, Philip was literally invisible. Only the highest grandees were allowed access to him, and even they only on their knees; his commands were issued in half-sentences whose meaning had to be guessed. No one was allowed to mount a horse he had ridden, nor marry a woman he had possessed. By his people he was quite truly regarded as holy, a sort of priest-king. His life was spent in the most comfortless monotony: he always ate the same food, which was punctually served at the same hours; he always wore the same black suit, even the orders on his breast were black: every day he perfomed the same journey through the empty, uninspiring environs of his castle; in his later years he never left his room at all except to go to mass. In his whole bearing he was the incarnation of the Spanish ideal of "*sosiego,*" the stark unimpressible quiet and outward calm which gives away none of its inner emotions. He approached no man too closely, or even closely; he was never unfriendly, but never, on the other hand, even ordinarily human. He had that cold politeness that keeps men at a distance, which humbles and offends more than the most brutal arrogance. He is reputed to have laughed only once in his life, and that was when he received news of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew — the Pope of the day, it is true, reacted to it still more brightly, for he celebrated the greatest massacre of modern times by a memorial coinage and a magnificent Te Deum and thereby defiled the chair of Peter more than any of his predecessors had done by their sodomy, simony, or bloodshed.

The World-Escorial

In one respect only, Philip was not Spanish: in his extraordinary industry. From morning till evening he sat at his state papers, settling all business personally, in his own handwriting and after mature consideration. But even on this tireless activity and devotion to duty there lay the same curse of sterility. His energy had nothing creative; it was the subaltern treadmill-energy of the chancery clerk, which has no end beyond itself. This is one of the many contradictions on which his life foundered: he had the world-spanning plans of a Napoleon and tried to accomplish them by the means of an uninspired, cumbrous and small-minded bureaucracy. This viscous dilly-dallying typifies his whole régime; his favourite expression was " I and my times," and his favourite answer to the most pressing question was "*Mañana* (tomorrow)." Moreover, with him as with all administrative bureaucrats, jealousy and suspicion amounted to a disease. There was none of his servants whom he wholly trusted, and he was always trying to play one off against the other. Military and diplomatic successes, and any conspicuous popularity or abilities, made him uneasy. To cope with these (generally imaginary) threats to the royal omnipotence he used the arts of hypocrisy, which as a Spaniard he possessed in the highest degree, and ingratitude, which was second nature to him as a Habsburg. The two most glaring instances were Egmont, the victor of Saint-Quentin and Gravelines, who was flattered and fêted in the most exquisite manner when his death had already been decided on, and Don Juan of Austria, who, after breaking for ever the sea power of Turkey at Lepanto, died suddenly (in a mysterious fashion) when he stood at the height of the royal favour. By this mania for persecution and puerile supervision Philip turned the proud Spaniards into a nation of lackeys, spies, and vagabonds. The Escorial is the living symbol of his nature. A stone desolation raised up in the form of the grid on which St. Laurence suffered martyrdom: cold and grey, monotonous and chilling and inaccessible, it was rather a monastery and cemetery than a residence and palace. And indeed what he bequeathed was nothing but one vast *escorial:* that is, a heap of cinders. The story runs that when he felt death approaching, he asked for a skull, on which a golden crown was placed, and that he fixed his gaze immovably upon it and so passed away — a moving climax and a splendid symbol of this royal life, so powerful, but so meaningless, and of the high spirituality that dwelt in this monster.

The destructive influence of Philip extended to everything that came under his régime. Never did he display the slightest appreciation of the fact that every personal and national idiom has its particular conditions and requirements for favourable expansion. The lands of Spanish blood suffered from the double weight of political despotism and clerical inquisition; the people was decimated by the unending *autos-da-fé,* which were accompanied by extravagant splendour and awe-inspiring solemnity, and trained the survivors to intolerance and cruelty. The censorship was nowhere so strict and inexorable as in Spain; visits to foreign schools were forbidden under heavy penalties, lest the poison of free-thought should infect. The Aragonese, Catalonians, and Andalusians in the provinces of the periphery, who differed very considerably from the population of the centre (the Meseta) in language, character, and manners, were brutally tyrannized: all Spain was to be made Castilian, subjugated to the harsh and gloomy, narrow and haughty type of the centre. In 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain by inheritance and force of arms and ruined for ever: its colonies were lost or fell away, its part in world commerce every year diminished in value and importance. The remains of the Arabs, the Moriscos, who were still numerous in the south, were driven to distraction by the most ridiculous and intolerable ordinances: they were forbidden to use their mother tongue either in public or in private, they were deprived of their black slaves, to whom they were devotedly attached; even their baths, their costume, and their musical instruments were denied to them. After a revolt which was bloodily repressed, many of them had fled overseas, and yet in the presence of this warning Philip immediately proceeded to his expulsion measures, without giving a thought to the fact that he was robbing himself of his most intelligent, efficient, and industrious subjects — for it was to the Moriscos that the country owed the splendid irrigation system which had turned the sand-deserts into fruitful gardens; it was they who controlled the rice culture, sugar and cotton, the manufacture of silk and paper — in fact, every profitable industry on which the wealth of Spain depended.

Spanish colonial policy

But his colonial policy was still madder. Even on the motherland the overseas conquests had many evil effects: they required the emigration of thousands whom thinly populated Spain could not spare, and they enhanced to an appalling degree in those who remained the native tendency to laziness and self-indulgence. As a result vast areas remained uncultivated, mining was neglected while the country still possessed great supplies of unutilized ore, trade and industry collapsed from malnutrition. As for the colonies themselves, the Spaniards there behaved not only like robbers, but like entirely stupid robbers. Their conduct was more or less that of banditti breaking up some invaluable mosaic in order to carry off the precious stones, or killing a milch cow, from which they might have had many years' sustenance, for a meal of its meat; nay, in their senseless greed they overate themselves and died of it. Even if they had occupied only the *Portuguese* colonies, it would have been far too much for them, for those included among many others the east and west coasts of Africa, the Moluccas, and the huge expanse of Brazil.

At the beginning they did not know even the first principle of colonial government: that it is only possible to gain lasting advantages from a conquered territory if it is allowed to flourish itself. Their one economic principle was a primitive robbery of the natives by means of the notorious *ripartimentos* — the compulsory distribution of worthless European imports at fantastic prices. As this source of income soon ran dry, they began the exploitation of the land by similar methods of compulsion; but the natives, who were over-refined by centuries of existence in mild surroundings and under mild government, could not fulfil these demands; many succumbed to their efforts, some fled to the wilds, the remainder took to systematic suicide, directly by means of vegetable poisons or indirectly by refusing to beget a posterity. Only a few endured to the end — those who had learnt from the Spanish priests that they could not avoid meeting white men even in the other world. In Jamaica, for instance, the native population had died out within fifty years of the conquest, and it was the same in Cuba also. The clergy — who, to their eternal honour, were almost always on the side of the natives — suggested a means for their protection which was unfortunately only a cause of further brutality. They proposed the import of Negro slaves from Africa, with the result that even in the first half of the sixteenth century that odious trade, in which almost all European nations partook, flourished exceedingly. It goes without saying that the Spaniards behaved no less heedlessly and madly with regard to the dumb natives of America; everywhere their track was marked by wanton annihilation of the natural fauna, vandal deforestation, and planless exhaustion of the forces of the earth.

The revolt of the Netherlands

The behaviour of the Spaniards in the Netherlands, which was the richest, most vital and cultured area of the North, was as bad as if they were dealing with some subject dominion of Negroes. It took a long time before their perverse folly, their blind avarice and inhuman brutality, could rouse to a passionate revolt that peace-loving and slowly moving people, these merchants with their account-books and pedagogues with their school-books. But once roused, there was no suppressing them. Alba's tactics, adopted at the express instructions of his king, were not merely despicable, but incomprehensible. The Council of Unrest, or the Bloody Council, as the people justly nicknamed it, was to deal with the punishment of traitors, and the term " traitor " included all who had signed a petition for the relaxation of the Inquisition or had failed to prevent such a petition, or who even under compulsion had listened to an evangelical sermon, or had said that the King had not the right to take from the provinces their liberty, or had disputed whether the Council of Unrest was above the law, or had asserted that one must obey God more than man, or any who had listened to such remarks in silence. Obviously it was almost impossible not to commit at least one of such crimes, and it was only the logical conclusion of these frenzied premisses when all inhabitants of the Netherlands were condemned to death on February 16, 1568 as heretics: an action which is probably unique in history. After thousands had been hanged, burned, imprisoned, exiled, or had had their property confiscated, a royal amnesty was issued promising immunity to all who could prove that they had never committed the slightest offence, on condition that they repented and asked for pardon within a definite period: such an amnesty also is probably without its match in history.

Now, it is illuminating for the student of human nature that the Netherlanders were not driven to revolt by any of these measures, but only by an administrative edict of the governor of a financial nature, which may have equalled the rest in folly and shamelessness, but which one would have imagined to be at least more tolerable. Alba had promised Philip he would send a stream of gold a fathom deep from the Netherlands to Spain, and he published a decree that taxes should be raised, of one per cent as a non-recurring income-tax on all movable and immovable property, of a " twentieth penny " or five per cent on all property that was sold, and of a " tenth penny " or ten per cent on every sale of movable goods. This last clause, more even than the others, would have meant the complete ruin of Netherlands commerce if it had been rigidly enforced. And then at last the country declared its independence, and the great Revolt of the Netherlands began with the cry: " Rather Turk than Papist." It was a victorious and heroic fight of a small nation of shopkeepers against the greatest military power of Europe. All this is very remarkable, but man is built so. Freedom, faith, even life may be taken from him sooner than income, wealth, and business. In the same way the Jacobins, whose administrative methods remind us by their stupidity and cruelty of the Spanish régime (though this was the outcome of a wholly different sort of attitude), made themselves intolerable, not by their suppression of public opinion, their scorn for religion, or their mass-executions, but by their attacks on property and their destructive effects on trade, industry, and finance: it was, in fact, the assignats and not the guillotine that ruined them.

Collapse of Philip's system

The revolt of the Netherlands marked the beginning of Philip's decline; after it, all went awry. His imperialistic program was briefly this: encircling France as he did with the Netherlands possessions on the north, with Franche-Comté on the east and with Spain on the south side, to keep it in a disrupted state internally by backing the power of the papist and anti-dynastic Ligue, and thus in the end to put one of his own kindred, or a member of some French house dependent on him, on the throne. In this way the only continental power that might be dangerous was to become a sort of Spanish protectorate. England he hoped to make his own either by such personal union as had previously existed during his marriage to " Bloody Mary " or by the superiority of his fleet. He already possessed a great part of Italy, and so held the rest of it diplomatically and militarily in subjection; a branch of the Habsburgs was ruling in the hereditary provinces of Austria and sat on the German throne. Thus the Hispanization and re-Catholicization of Europe would have been actually achieved, for the Turks would have been hardly able to stand against the colossal power of such a union.

But the realization everywhere fell short of the project, easily executable as this appeared to be. Even his own family did not adjust themselves to Philip's plans. Under his uncle Ferdinand I, the successor of Charles V, the Reformed faith gained a large number of adherents in the Austrian area, and his son, the emperor Maximilian II, one of the most notable of the Habsburgs, was almost a Protestant. In France, after decades of terrible confusion, the first and greatest of the Bourbons ascended the throne in Henry IV, and he not only gave the Huguenots the same civil rights as the Catholics by the Edict of Nantes, but pursued a strictly national and anti-Spanish policy. Elizabeth scorned the marriage proposals of Philip and even supported the revolted Netherlanders with cash and men. Against England, therefore, Philip directed his first great effort, and in the spring of 1588 the "Invincible Armada," the strongest and best-equipped fleet that modern Europe had ever seen, left Lisbon harbour. Its fate is well known, but it was not storms alone that destroyed it; its ruin was due to similar causes to those which laid low the vast sea power which Xerxes brought against the Greeks. The Persian and the Spanish ships were huge floating houses, packed with men and arms, but incapable of manœuvring, and by their numbers obstructing each other rather than the enemy. The English and Greek ships were not built to inspire fear, but to constitute mobile and effective units: they could flee as easily as they could attack, while the ungainly monsters of the enemy had to wait till their opponents drew up to them and if a quick retreat was necessary, crashed against each other. But the deeper and truer reason for the *débâcle* in each case was that *spirit* was on the side of the weaker. It was spirit that conquered in the Channel as at Salamis.

Don Juan and Don Quixote

Thus even at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Italian poet Alessandro Tassoni was only setting down the general opinion when he called Spain an elephant with the soul of a chicken, a thunderbolt that dazzles but does not kill, a giant whose arms were tied with cords. And yet, despite Philip's failures, the Spaniards showed a devoted loyalty to him, and even centuries after, the saying was common that there was no second to Philip II, "*Felipe segundo sin segundo.*" One of the chief reasons for this loyalty was that, as has been mentioned above, he possessed to an extreme and even to an absurd degree the national characteristics of the Spaniards. But there was another reason as well, for this strange man was one of the most munificent and judicious patrons of art and science. He gave his people a permanent, definite, and specific style of thought. His manuscript collection at the Escorial, gigantic like all he undertook, aroused the admiration of the whole world; the architecture produced under his encouragement, the so-called "*estilo plateresco*" or goldsmith style, a bewildering mosaic of Moorish, Gothic, and Italian elements — eclectic and yet at the same time original in the very extravagance of its ornament — is a brilliant expression of the Spanish character. Literature, too, already began to produce the most remarkable creations during his reign; it included Tirso de Molina and Cervantes, each of whom gave birth to the finest and rarest creation of which a poet is capable — namely, a figure which is not merely a strong individual personality, but a new species of man, an artistic synthesis of a whole genus. Tirso de Molina wrote the first drama dealing with Don Juan, who is the Romance counterpart of Faust and Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* originally only a caricature of the exaggerated knightly romance of the times and the heroic perversity of the hidalgo, ended by becoming far more, an immortal tragicomedy of human idealism. At bottom Don Quixote is the eternal type of the *poet:* he has discovered that reality always deceives him and must by its very essence deceive him (for that essence is itself *unreal*) and he therefore determines not to recognize it! As *Don Quixote* is the first romance in world literature, Mendoza's *Historia de la guerra de Granada* is the first real historical work of the modern age — lucid, precise, amazingly impartial; and Lope de Vega, that "*monstruo de naturaleza,*" with his fifteen hundred dramas, is the first modern playwright on the large scale. Indeed, every true dramatist is a polygraph, a play-factory, and his life's achievement properly belongs not to the history of literature, but to that of technique. His object is not to produce figures, but rôles, not "works," but text-books, often, indeed, frameworks for texts; not eternal values, but values of the moment. His master is the public, whom he scorns but serves; Lope realized this himself when he said that the aim of drama is to please. The same was the case with Calderon and Molière; and indeed with Shakspere too, for he wrote a vast amount, but only so long as he was a manager, and he had none of his plays printed, because outside the theatre there was no justification for their existence; our Shaksperian scholars with their disputations on textual purity and authenticity would have struck him as immensely comic.

World-rule of the Spanish style

So great was the hypnotic influence of the Spanish that it subdued the whole of Europe. This is manifested first of all in costume, which after the end of the sixteenth century is completely Hispanized. The basic idea is a gloomy sobriety, a concentrated formality, a flaunted bigotry. It is almost true to say that court attire becomes everyday dress. The tight Spanish boots, the stiff Spanish ruff and cloak, are still proverbial, and the trunk-hose puffed out with horsehair, the vest with padded sleeves and cushioned goose-belly, and the pointed Spanish hat with its narrow brim. Till then women had been eager to emphasize their attractions: now they began modestly to hide them with corsets to flatten the breast, and their skirts were stiffened or hooped out on wire crinolines to hide the whole of the lower part of their bodies. A striking innovation was the handkerchief, and a complete toilet would require, for a woman, a fan and mask, for a man the pointed rapier, and for both, gloves; even indoors it was ill-mannered to appear without hat and cloak. The increasingly gigantic size of the ruff led to the close cropping of the hair and the narrow, pointed beard — the so-called "*Henri Quatre*," though that king never wore it himself.

At the same time there spread abroad from Spain the "*estilo culto*" or "*cultismo*," a fashion of words embellished, exaggerated, decorative, brave with forced and empty allegories. Its founder was the poet Luis de Góngora, from whom the style was called Gongorism, though in Italy it was called Marinismo after its chief representative, Giambattista Marini, whose artificial antitheses and florid similes were admired and imitated by the whole world. In France it was called "*préciosité*" and in England Euphuism, after Lyly's famous romance *Euphues, the Anatomy* *of Wit,* a series of frigid witticisms and affected *concetti,* as they were called, a playing on words which had an influence on Shakspere's diction that was as lasting as it was injurious. It not only pervaded the whole poetry of the time, but was echoed in scientific literature, in polite conversation, and even in decrees, petitions, and resolutions of Parliament. Its ideal was *bizzarria* at all costs, its object *lo stupore,* to amaze: "*è del poeta il fin la maraviglia,*" Marini taught; and he was put by his contemporaries tower-high above all Greek, Roman, and Hebrew poets.

This passion for empty affectation and heavy mannerism found expression in the morbid collecting mania and childish love of every kind of rarity that is a special characteristic of the period. In the collections of Rudolf II in the palace of Prague, side by side with the finest works of art, there were to be found boxes with magnetic stones and Indian feathers, roots and mandrake, three bagpipes, two iron nails out of Noah's ark, a crocodile in a case, a "stone that grows," a monster with two heads, a "fleece that had fallen from heaven," "all manner of strange sea-fish, and therewith a bat." Equally unmeaning was the undiscriminating antiquarianism and tasteless delight in all conceivable mythological, archæological, and philological allusions. Thus, for example, when the masque of *The Judgment of Paris* was performed before Elizabeth, the gardens swarmed with nymphs, the terraces with satyrs, the pools with Nereids and Tritons. Diana approached the Queen and declared her the archetype of maiden chastity and invited her to the shelter of the wood, where she should be safe from Actæon's pursuit. At the end Paris was put on trial for giving the apple to Venus and not to the Queen. At the royal table pasties were served depicting Ovidian metamorphoses, and there was a raisin cake on which was displayed the War of Troy. On another occasion Cupid, amid a band of Olympian gods, approached the Queen and handed her a golden arrow, the sharpest in his quiver, possessed of such irresistible fascination that the hardest heart would feel the wound. And at that time the Queen was fifty years of age.

French Classicism and comic-opera Naturalism

The country in which Classicism exercised the strongest influence, however, was France, where the consolidation of the monarchy gradually made Paris the predominant point that drew all currents into itself as the great representative centre of the country, which it has remained to this day. The capital became decisive for literature, architecture, fashions, manners. From the time of Francis I all changes in architecture took their impulse from the court and the royal palace, and the Sorbonne was the absolute authority in all theological and scientific questions. Paris was France.

The real founder of French Classicism in poetry was François de Malherbe, who, in the words of Boileau's eulogy, " led the Muse back to the harness of duty "; he is the father of that correctly emotional, soberly graceful type of poetry which survived in France till the nineteenth century. He established the supremacy of the Alexandrine, a metre as flexible as it is monotonous, and one which, just because it is so indifferent, admits of anything being said in it. At the same time a second element was introduced into (and has also remained typical of) French literature — with Honoré d'Urfé's famous pastoral romance *Astrée,* for which the French mind conceived an enthusiasm that established for two hundred years the tepidly sentimental pseudo-naturalism of comic opera. D'Urfé's Celadon, equally with Don Juan and Don Quixote, passed from an individual into an idea, and his powdered shepherds of the stage, and scented nymphs, whose lively coyness bears the same relation to natural passion as *décolleté* to nudity, still peopled Rousseau's world of ideas.

The sceptic affirmation of life

In architecture the " French style " had even then reached its height, and the aristocracy and higher clergy who lived on the social peaks erected a brilliant symbol of themselves in the châteaux of the sixteenth century. Their homes are exactly parallel to their attitude to their life and conventions, elegant and cheerful, but a little prosaic, well lighted and wide-viewed but without genuine warmth, harmonious and clearly articulated, but without the grandiose gesture of their Italian forerunners, rich in pictures and magnificently panelled, but architecturally jejune in their interiors, airy and spacious, but with an effect of bareness — and, therefore, just castles, isolated, barred, and self-centred. The reader will perhaps have observed already that we are speaking of Montaigne.

The professional historians of philosophy, if they ever condescend to deal with so unphilosophically lucid and worldly-wise a thinker as Montaigne, treat him as the typical sceptic. But

Montaigne's scepticism is no one-sided negation, but an all-round affirmation. He knows too much to be able to lay down anything positive; he cannot take up any one standpoint because he might adopt them all; his power of thought is too pervasive to suffer the restrictions of a system.

A sceptic, in the sense in which Montaigne was one, is passionately devoted to the golden mean, he is the " tongue of the balance," as Emerson said; he does not wish to rule the world or to surrender to it, he wants to observe it. His motto is Dante's amazing saying: "*Non ci badar, ma guarda e passa.*" Look and pass on; that is the best attitude to take up to the world's course. Or, as Byron said: " I regard myself as a being put by the hand of God in the midst of a great theatre." The sceptic knows all, understands all and laughs at all. The idealist does not treat reality seriously, and the realist replies by not taking the idealist world seriously either. The sceptic takes neither seriously: for him the world is an eternal seesaw. " Everything moves to and fro, the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the pyramids. Even consistency is nothing but a less violently oscillating seesaw." Montaigne's mind was a benevolent mixture of delighted enjoyment of life and an uneasy bent for introspection. Of himself he said that he was by nature not melancholy, but only given to investigation; life for him is in itself neither a good nor a bad thing, but the sphere of good and evil according to what you put into it — a thought which we find in Shakspere also. To be " prepared " was to him everything: " I sing and say to myself incessantly that all that may one day happen may happen today." He was undoubtedly a stoic, but the most human and the most delightful stoic who ever lived. The final end of life lies in satisfaction, and " even in virtue the aim to which we look is pleasure, by which we ought to mean the most delightful, sweetest, and most natural enjoyment." Thus he was also undoubtedly an Epicurean, but one of the most sensitive and dignified Epicureans who ever lived. The central purpose of his whole philosophy, however, was self-observation and self-depiction: " I study myself, that is my metaphysics and my physics." And man, led by Montaigne towards himself, towards a good-humoured care-free study of his own peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, his own unreasonableness and contradictions, his own ambiguities and background, must come out at scepticism, in that he must recognize that he does not know himself.

The Montaigne-man

The type created by Montaigne of the bright man of the world, who unites strong inclinations with weak convictions, equally prepared to enjoy or to die, meets us everywhere in the higher ranges of society. But only a small minority were able to stand against the danger of moral insanity which is latent in every logical scepticism; and even they made too massive a thing out of Montaigne's brave sense of reality. But they all have Montaigne in their blood, with his doubts as well as his sensualism — William of Orange, for example, who was equally observant of himself and clear-sighted in judgment of others, whose proverbial taciturnity was nothing but scepticism and the realization that the word kills the truth; who was Protestantism's strongest champion, and yet in the depths of his soul quite neutral in matters of faith; or the cold realist Elizabeth, who was lauded as the rock of the Reformation, but was equally neutral in reality; or the impartial, even *politically* impartial, Catherine de' Medici, who in her passion for power, like a drug-addict's for his opiate, simply had to rule at any cost, no matter whether it was by way of Guises or Huguenots, Spaniards or French, noble or plebeian; or Essex, another who was eager for power; or the jocular-cynical Cecil; or Kepler, who was confessionally, though not religiously, an indifferent. But the supreme example is Henry IV, the greatest ruler of the age. His sovereign insight saw into both parties as they really were, and discerning that both as they stood were equally in the wrong, he did them both justice. It was as a realist too that he reached the knowledge that the substantial enjoyments of the flesh, handsome women, fine clothes, country houses, gardens, horses, good wine and food, are not to be despised. But Hamlet, too, has read Montaigne and been led by him to the deep conviction that anyone who acts, in that thereby he takes up a definite standpoint, must of necessity become limited, unjust, and cruel, and that an act is an absurdity.

Jakob Böhme

Even the complete philosophical antipodes to Montaigne, the heavy, narrow, dull, and obscure Jakob Böhme, has something of Montaigne's spirit. For no one has penetrated so deeply or illuminated so broadly the principle of the "coincidence of opposites," the contradictions of the world and humanity, as this profound shoemaker. One day he noted a useless old pewter pot in which the sun was reflected, and realized with astonishment that though it was just a bad and crude pewter pot, it could yet contain the sun. Thereupon he became that which men call clairvoyant and went into retirement, where he wrote one of the finest of theosophical works. The sudden revelation that had come to him was that everything in the world can only be manifested by its opposite, light by darkness, good by evil, yea by nay, God by the world, His love by His anger, and hence that all being not only consists of opposites, but exists by reason of them, for it is only through them that there is being at all.

Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno, too, the loftiest and most universal brain of the age, made the coincidence of opposites one of the cardinal ideas of his work and described it as a " magic formula " of philosophy. His splendid intuitions outstripped his contemporaries by hundreds of years. Beginning as a Dominican, leaving the order because of a suspicion of heresy, he led a restless, wandering existence in Italy, France, England, and Germany, took a degree as Doctor of Philosophy at Toulouse, attached a number of ardent adherents to himself in Paris, and lectured in Oxford and Wittenberg to large audiences on astronomy and philosophy; but was exposed everywhere to persecution for his freedom of thought and his irony, was arrested on his return home by the Inquisition, and finally, after years of unsuccessful efforts to make him recant, was burnt in Rome in the year 1600.

As Wilhelm Dilthey has remarked, Bruno was truly the " son of the strip of land between Vesuvius and the Mediterranean." He was himself a Vesuvius, pouring out lava, fiery and formless, throwing the world into amazement and terror by the glory and force of his eruptions, consuming himself in his own fire, and finally himself burnt to ashes. He was a poet as intensely as he was a philosopher, and his two talents did not balance themselves, but lay in tragic opposition, so that he could only bring to birth gigantic hybrids; he, too, had some of the passion for metaphor and for exaggeration which was typical of Gongorism, but sublimated to a dæmonic level. To him God is the wholly unknowable, dwelling in a light that is inaccessible to human insight. We see the statue, but not the sculptor, and of the divine substance we perceive but a trace and a remote effect; it is only as a shadowy reflection, in riddling words, that we can look upon God. From this he arrives at a more or less definite pantheism, which anticipates the Spinozistic formula: "*deus sive natura*" in the saying that God and nature are opposed only in the mind of the unseeing. And the principle of the monad was taken over from him by Leibniz, who carried it to triumph. In this matter Bruno's teaching coincided entirely with Leibniz's: there is one mathematical minimum, the point, one physical minimum, the atom, and one metaphysical minimum, the monad. Each of these is a mirror of the All, every one eternal, and only its relations are changing. Thus the monads are the Godhead itself, which, though an indivisible unity, is yet present in each one of them as a particular phenomenal form, just as in each particle of an organism the organic force, and in each element of a work of art the artistic force, live undivided, and yet are displayed in specific form: "*omnia ubique.*" As the earth revolves simultaneously on its own axis and round the sun, so each thing obeys not only the particular law of its own being, but the general law of the universe. The death of the monad is no more a passing into nothing than its birth is a creation out of nothing. And so Bruno became the master of the two greatest philosophers of the century in whose first year his body was given to the flames. But his influence was even wider still: Hamann, the deepest thinker of the German Enlightenment, joined on to him, and even later still, Schelling called one of his works *Bruno, or the Natural and Divine Principle of Things.*

Still more remarkable are Bruno's anticipations of the future of astronomy. He completed the Copernican system and anticipated Galileo; he taught that the earth was only approximately of spherical form, and flattened at the poles; that the sun also rotates on its own axis; that all fixed stars are suns round which planets invisible to us through their distance revolve. He proposed the hypothesis of the æther, which has only been accepted in recent times; he even had an idea of the theory of relativity when he asserted that there were as many times as there were stars; and some of his views go beyond our present knowledge and belong to the future, notably his hypotheses on the condition of bodies in the universe. In the cosmos as he saw it, there are countless stars, worlds, suns, and earths, for the universe is infinite in all directions; and therefore none is central, but there are as many centres as there are worlds or even atoms. All constellations are individuals, colossal organisms, and yet, in relation to still bigger world-individuals, only parts and organs. These huge bodies are all built up of the same elements, and consequently the forces working in them are those known to us. " Anyone who imagined that there were no more planets than those we know is as wise as a man who imagined that there were no more birds in the air than he can observe from his own little window." " Only a fool could hold the opinion that in infinite space, on the countless universes of which the majority have certainly a better fate than we, there is nothing more than the light that we receive from them. It is simply nonsensical to assume there are no other forms of life, no other capacities for thinking, no other senses than those we know." Such intuitive knowledge takes Bruno far beyond even our modern astronomy, which by its nervous caution and narrow pedantry does not dare to go beyond the poor facts which its adored telescopes can tell it. We are again and again assured by the specialists — that is, men who have only seen one side of the truth — that the moon is a dead earth, the sun exists only to distribute light and warmth, while life is impossible upon it, that Mars may once have nurtured highly intelligent men, but unfortunately only in the distant past. All this sort of thing is sheer anthropomorphic chatter of high-browed but narrow-browed pedants; for it is fundamentally impossible that there should be an earth that is dead. Such would be a contradiction in terms, for earth means life and the home of life. How, then, can it be dead? As for the sun, how could it create so much life on so many planets, maintain them, raise them, and renew them if it were not itself an inexhaustible hearth of life. Is it likely that it would use its vast creative powers for its satellites and keep none at all for itself? Further, if there ever was life on Mars, it is quite impossible that there should no longer be any, for life always has the tendency to propagate, elevate, and multiply itself. Can one seriously doubt that the mission of all divinely created beings to spiritualize themselves completely has been already achieved on other heavenly bodies? Every star represents a plane of perfection — that is, one of the possible levels of spiritualization. Every one has life and living beings upon it, developing upwards, even if its inhabitants do not always wear the appearance of a professor of astronomy.

Francis Bacon

It is quite natural that Bruno, who is in advance even of our own times, should have been regarded by his contemporaries either as a diabolical seducer or a mad fantastic. The philosopher who gave clear and definite expression to what all the world was thinking was Francis Bacon: no fathomless volcano like Bruno, no God-seeker, struggling in the darkness, like Böhme, no sensitive psychological atom like Montaigne, no fiery world-eye like Shakspere, but a deliberate and impressive speaker who had the gift of comprehending and brilliantly formulating the effort of his own age. It was of his essence that he was English, for such a philosophy as his could only come out of England.

The rise of England

During the sixteenth century England developed from a mediæval city-state into a modern European great power, not as patriotic legend pretends, thanks to its rulers, but in spite of them, for they were generally mediocre, often contemptible. Henry VIII we have come across several times already. Not even Shakspere's court poetry with all its retouching could depict him except as a coarse and treacherous despot. Holbein's portrait is enough to give a complete idea of this bejewelled butcher, this overpowering incarnation of bestial energy and insatiable vitality. His son, Edward VI, who gave promise of talents, died in youth; he was succeeded by "Bloody Mary," an embittered old maid and intense bigot, who, completely under the influence of her husband, Philip II (for whom she had a lifelong and ill-requited passion), strove by the most brutal means to bring about a Catholic restoration and — what her subjects resented far more even than her cruel attempts at reaction — lost Calais in the war with France which she carried on as an ally of Spain. If she had lived a few years longer, revolution would have followed. Her successor was Elizabeth, a prudent and clear-sighted but immoderately vain and egoistic woman, with the brutal unscrupulousness, cool deceit, and self-righteous prudery which England's enemies regard as her national characteristics. Certainly "cant" was developed in her, even so soon, to sheer artistry. It is a quality for which no other language has a word, because no other people has the characteristic. Cant is neither lying nor hypocrisy: it is something far more complicated. It is a talent — namely, that of feeling everything to be true and good which brings immediate practical advantage. When an Englishman feels anything for any reason to be unpleasant, he concludes — in his subconsciousness — to call it wrong or untrue. Thus he has the singular faculty of being perfidious not only to others, but to himself, and he exerts his talent with the clearest conscience, which is perfectly natural since it is an instinct that he is satisfying. Cant is something that may be described as honest deceit or the gift of cheating oneself.

The two most infamous blots on the reign of Elizabeth are the executions of Essex and of Mary Queen of Scots. On both occasions she was, as queen and as politician, in the right, for Essex was a traitor, and Mary the head of many dangerous conspiracies. What does bring discredit on her is that she not merely pursued justice to its bloody end, but that she sought to get a reputation for womanly gentleness and Christian mercy out of it all as well. Nor can any reasonable man reproach her for her many lovers, but only for the cool *tartufferie* with which she allowed herself throughout her reign to be celebrated as the Virgin Queen and permitted Walter Raleigh (who must himself have known better) to call the first English colony Virginia in her honour. In this respect she fell far lower than her deadly rival Mary, who probably committed as many crimes in her life, but none with such coldblooded deliberation, and certainly " strayed " both less often and more frankly. When Mary's lover Bothwell blew her husband Darnley into the air, the whole of Scotland rose in insurrection, but when Elizabeth's favourite Leicester poisoned his wife, public opinion was silent, for things had been managed far more cleverly; still, cleverness has never yet been regarded as an extenuating circumstance in a murder case.

On Elizabeth's death, after fifty-five years' reign, she was succeeded by James I, son of Mary Stuart and great-grandson of Margaret Tudor; he united both crowns, uniting, however, at the same time the evil qualities of both the rival houses — the domineering obstinacy and arrogance of the Tudors and the inertia and moral irresponsibility of the Stuarts. His father was probably Mary's secretary, the ugly David Rizzio, who was bestially murdered by Darnley. His figure was fat and ungainly, his head thick, and his beard thin, his eyes bulging, his speech stammering and unmusical; men said that he spat out rather than articulated his words. He was unusually timid and distrustful, could not look on a naked sword, and spent his life in fear of conspiracy and assassination. He was as childishly vain as his predecessor, but far less intelligent, for he tolerated only views that agreed with his own. He was particularly proud of his theological education, and frequently used it to the horror of his court in the most hair-splitting debates. His second passion was for handsome young men, and such could get anything from him, however insignificant or common they might be. Despite the nervous movements, his clumsy gait and boorish manners that made him the reverse of royal, no ruler was ever so convinced of his divine right as he. He regarded himself as the unlimited dictator over the life, property, and thoughts of his subjects, and that at a time anything but propitious, and among a people anything but amenable, to such views. As, further, he lacked all political insight and ability, he was continuously at loggerheads with his Parliament, though open revolt was postponed till his successor's time. At the end of his reign the saying was that Great Britain is smaller than Britain.

The Elizabethan man

Nevertheless these hundred years form the first great age of England's glory. Trade, industry, seamanship, science, art, and literature developed even to over-ripeness. London in Elizabeth's time was a city of three hundred thousand souls, with countless shops, an important Exchange, a permanent market, and almost twenty permanent theatres. The streets were carefully laid out, the water-supply regulated through wooden pipes, lighting and fire-police much improved. There were many well-ordered schools, apothecaries' shops, printing establishments, and even something like newspapers. The Thames was packed with gaily decorated boats; an unbroken stream of pedestrians, horsemen, and litters enlivened the city; the upper classes already used coaches, and their new country-houses, of the Tudor style, were effective, practical, inviting, and (in contrast to the continental villas) built primarily to be lived in: already the Englishman's taste for prosperous and pleasant domesticity was displaying itself. Clothes were brave, rich, well looked after, and not lacking in taste. Ordinary comforts, however, were not much in advance of the Middle Ages; sleeping-arrangements were still primitive, table-forks were not used, and meals were chiefly remarkable for the quantity consumed; for ordinary use wooden utensils were preferred. Tobacco was a new luxury, which had first been recommended by Jean Nicot for medical uses, but was very soon domesticated by Drake's and Raleigh's sailors; even by the end of the century it was in common use, smoked, however, not as by the Indians in cigarette form, but exclusively in a pipe. The clergy opposed smoking, and the doctrinaire James also forbade it on theological grounds, but he soon found it to be a useful source of revenue. The tobacco-shops, in which lessons were given in smoking, were packed, the gilded youth entered the theatres with reeking pipes, and Raleigh was reproached with puffing clouds of smoke even at Essex's execution.

The average education of the upper classes stood on a pretty high level: everyone, women as well as men, read Latin poets and philosophers, sang and made music, studied mathematics and astronomy. Conversation was witty and exquisite, even though made artificial with euphuisms. On the other hand, there was plenty of crudity still. Law was as barbaric as ever. The three greatest dramatists next to Shakspere — Peele, Greene, and Marlowe — were mere drunkards and heroes of the knife; James was an absolute clown; even Queen Bess was delighted when the people cried to her in the streets: " How goes it, old whore? " and would use vulgar expressions of the sea in the middle of a cultured conversation or, when roused, could brawl like a fishwife. Her dispute with Essex is famous: when he cried: " Your mind is as crooked as your carcass," she replied: " Go and hang thyself " and gave him a box on the ears.

The awkward age of capitalism

The men of the so-called English Renaissance, which reached its height under Elizabeth, were, in fact, a mixture of unrestrained elemental humanity and modern Englishness, a cross between a tough, shrewd man of affairs and a wild, reckless adventurer. Their attitude is precisely defined by the term " merchant adventurers " — merchants and seamen who were robber-knights of the sea, roaming (at first on their own initiative and later with the support of royal privileges) over all the coasts of east and west, but also founding trading factories and instituting trade relations. It was, indeed, piracy with protection and profit-sharing by the State; in time of war it was called privateering. The great admirals, circumnavigators, conquerors, and colonizers — Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, Essex, and the other sea-dogs of Elizabethan times —

were nothing but corsairs; and the trading companies, concessionaire companies for the raiding of lands overseas, were somewhat similar. Smuggling, robbing, and the slave-trade stood beside the cradle of English, and indeed all modern, capitalism.

For two reasons. In the first place, all trade and finance are only a sort of deception that has been civilized and set in orderly paths. We have seen in chapter iii how great were the difficulties, moral and social, under which the transition from natural economy and pure handicraft to gold economy and trade for trade's sake was effected. If, now, these handicaps are worse at the outset than later, the periods of transition often produce in correlation and compensation the great men who recognize no limitations. But it is so with every innovation — in religion, art, science, and sociology — it is met at its birth by disfavour, since it has against it the "good conscience" of previous realities, and it is therefore bound to appear in antisocial forms, as a paralogism, as "romance," as criminality. And just as even the respectable, peace-loving merchants of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still visibly display the traits of their ancestors, the pirate and robber-knight, so also we can discover in the present-day cosmopolitan financier the descendant of the *chevalier d'industrie,* the gambler, and the cheat. The times we are now considering were the "awkward age" of capitalism, when industry showed itself in exuberant and tumultuous forms, in the character of some fever or ecstasy or child's disease. No one could escape the infection, as we shall see in a moment: not even the clearest and wisest head in England and the whole age. The visible symbol of this merchant spirit was the great Exchange in London which the court banker Sir Thomas Gresham handed over for financial traffic in 1571.

The exact sciences

Parallel with the economic transformation, there came a great uprising in the exact sciences. In the first half of the century, as we have seen, there had been a number of important developments in mathematics and cosmology, in medicine, chemistry, zoölogy, and geography, and these researches were continued, and in some cases completed, during the next two generations. François Vieta elevated algebra into a science, began its application to geometry, and advanced the calculation of circles by investigations into the value of π; Geronimo Cardano discovered the formula for the solution of cubic equations, and in the imaginaries of the type $\sqrt{-1}$

he made a discovery of incalculable importance. John Napier published the first logarithmic tables with the title "*mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio*"; the Dutch doctor van Helmont discovered airlike substances that are yet different from air (the gases), and substances which are able to set up dissociative processes in the body-juices (the ferments). Kaspar Bauhin described all known plants according to their root, their stalk and leaf-formation, their flower, fruit, and seeding processes, gave them a double name according to genus and species, and was thus the most important predecessor of Linnæus. Piccolomini by his account of the tissues laid the foundations of general anatomy; Coiter those of pathological anatomy; Paré those of surgery; and Palissy, by maintaining unhesitatingly that fossilized animal forms were survivals of organisms which had lived on the earth in earlier periods, those of palæontology.

The most astonishing successes, however, were in physics and astronomy. William Gilbert, Elizabeth's own physician, was the founder of theoretical electricity and magnetism, and even then recognized that the earth was itself a great magnet, (whence he called the spherical magnet with which he experimented *Terella*, little earth). The Dutchman Simon Stevin, who was notable also as a fortress engineer and as the inventor of the ice-yacht, was the first to investigate (in his *hypomnemata mathematica*) the mechanical properties of the inclined plane and, by the law of the parallelogram of forces and the principle of virtual displacements, laid the foundations of modern statics. He also made a number of fruitful researches in hydrostatics and amongst other things discovered the "hydrostatic paradox" that the surface pressure in a vessel which is wider at the top is less, and that in one which narrows towards the top is greater, than the weight of the liquid concerned; he proved also that in connected tubes the level of water is always the same even when the diameters are different. The great Danish astronomer Tycho de Brahe observed the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, discovered a new star in Cassiopeia and, with the help of the King, constructed a splendid observatory; later, being compelled by theological persecution to leave his country, he died in Prague as astronomer royal to the Emperor Rudolf. There he had Kepler as his assistant, and it was the unparalleled exactness of his calculations and tables that made possible his pupil's later discoveries. In a certain sense, indeed, his system was a retrogression, for, though he assumed the planets to move round the sun, he made the sun revolve round the earth, and thus restored the earth again to the centre of the universe. He arrived at this conclusion by arguing that, if the Copernican system were sound, the earth would be at quite different distances from the individual groups of stars in early spring and autumn and that therefore the chart of the fixed stars would present a very different appearance at these respective seasons. He could not at that date imagine the enormous cosmic distances that make this apparently quite justifiable objection pointless.

The world of the telescope

The invention of the telescope was as much in the air at the beginning of the sixteenth century as the discovery of America had been a hundred years before. It was constructed in 1608 by Hans Lippershey, whose priority was disputed by Zacharias Jansen, and in the next year was again invented quite independently by Galileo. In 1611, in his *Dioptric,* Kepler laid down the date for the construction of the so-called astronomical telescope, which the Jesuit Father Scheiner realized in 1613. At the same period Galileo was observing the mountains of the moon, the ring of Saturn, the sun-spots, whose movements showed him the rotation of the sun, and the moons of Jupiter — this last a fatal discovery for the adherents of the old doctrines, since it proved that the world of Jupiter was a reduced copy of the planetary system and that a stellar body might very well form a centre of movement and yet have movement of its own. But his discoveries extended further still, and in 1610 he wrote to a friend: " I have also noted a multitude of fixed stars that have never been seen and which in number exceeds those visible to the eye tenfold; and I know now what the Milky Way is, about which the wise men of all ages have disputed." He was no less great as a physicist — the founder of dynamics, a wholly new science, unknown to the ancients, who had only worked on statics; the discoverer of the theory of the projectile motion and of free falling (to which the swinging of a lamp in the Cathedral of Pisa is said to have brought him); the formulator of the law of inertia, the inventor of the hydrostatic balance and the thermometer.

The ideas of Galileo were so disturbing that there were men who refused to look into his telescope, for fear of seeing in it things which might upset the earlier philosophy and even the Church. Legend makes him a martyr to freedom of thought, from whom a recantation was forced by the powers of darkness. But this schoolbook story is not quite accurate. The truth is that many clerical dignitaries, and even Pope Urban VIII, showed the greatest interest in his researches and saw nothing objectionable in them. The real reason for the persecution that he had to endure was his morbid sensibility and dogmatism, his lack of tact and ability to handle men, and his predilection (rooted in the habits of Humanism) for mingling religious speculations with exact investigation, a proceeding which his contemporaries rightly thought not only irreligious, but unscientific. It must be admitted, however, that the envy of his colleagues contributed. In his chief astronomical work, in which according to the custom of the times he worked out his ideas in dialogue form, there occurred a ridiculous figure called Simplicius, who brought the most absurd objections against the new theory; Simplicius was meant as a skit on the Aristotelians, but Galileo's enemies managed to persuade the Pope that it was aimed at him, and it was only then that Urban, who was no less intelligent and free-thinking than he was vain and irritable, began to move against Galileo. He was sentenced to imprisonment (which, incidentally, was not very rigorous), and his books, with all others that taught the heliocentric system, were put on the Index. This was the beginning of the opposition between the Catholic Church and the new astronomy; Copernicus, as we have seen, had dedicated his work to the Pope, Jesuits (such as the Father Scheiner above mentioned) took an active part in research, and the Jesuit Grimberger declared that if Galileo had had the sense to secure the goodwill of the Jesuits, he might have written about anything, even a reversal of the earth's motion. All the same, the Church by its attitude injured itself far more than the scientists whom it persecuted, for it became involved in a vital conflict with all progressive forces of the next centuries, and in that it was bound to succumb.

Side by side with Galileo, Kepler was working. In 1607 he discovered Halley's comet — the first whose return was noted and has since been regularly noted at intervals of 76 $\frac{1}{3}$ years (on the last occasion in 1910) — developed in his *Dioptric* the ideas of refraction and the theory of vision, worked out the true permanent foundations of planetary paths, and laid the permanent foundations of our view of the structure of the solar system in the so-called "Kepler's Laws": according to which, firstly, all planets move in ellipses of which one of the foci is the sun; secondly, the radius of each planet sweeps over equal areas in equal times; and thirdly, the squares of the periodic times of the planets are proportional to the cubes of their mean distances from the sun. The corollary was that one uniform and strict law and one regularly operative force controls our whole planetary system, and indeed the whole universe.

The character of Bacon

All these economic, social, and scientific tendencies were put together by Bacon in his philosophy. He stood at the summit of his times in every sense of the phrase, a notable politician, Attorney-General, Keeper of the Great Seal, Lord Chancellor, Baron Verulam, and Viscount St. Albans. The whole world looked up to him as to a centre of light; and this has made the importance of his philosophic achievements seem greater, and his moral defects more outstanding, than they were. Even nowadays there is no unanimity about his character. Macaulay, with that judicial attitude of his that makes him love to play the advocate or public prosecutor, has condemned Bacon completely, while others, still more one-sidedly, have tried to prove him wholly spotless. The two great scandals in which his career was involved were the action of Elizabeth against Essex and of James against himself. Essex, who thought himself slighted by the Queen, had, in the passionate, ill-considered way that was natural to him, started a rebellion against her which was at once repressed. In his defence he maintained that his movement had been directed only against his most powerful rival, Raleigh, who had threatened his life. He received the death sentence with the greatest composure. During the trial, in which he was intimately concerned, Bacon argued in the most unsparing spirit against Essex, the man who had been a lifelong friend and to whom he owed his innumerable favours and recommendations. He compared him to Henri of Guise, the head of the anti-dynastic party in France, to Absalom, who rose against his father, to Pisistratus, who disguised his plans of usurpation by proclaiming that he was the subject of murderous plots and displaying self-inflicted wounds as evidence of this fact. After Essex's execution Bacon, on orders from the Queen, who saw her position weakened by the sentence on the popular favourite, wrote an "account of the intrigues and plots attempted and done by the late Robert, Earl of Essex and his fellows," in which he not only repeated all his earlier charges in the foulest terms, but further accused the dead man — certainly unjustly — of having made common cause with the Irish rebels, against whom he had been sent as general, and having concerted an armed descent on England with the object of murdering the Queen and setting himself in her place. Twenty years later, at the height of his fame and power, Bacon was himself accused of having taken bribes in his capacity as judge and — on the evidence of numerous witnesses and on his own admissions — was unanimously condemned to a fine and banishment to his estates, where he at last had the leisure to write the work which his pursuit of wealth and influence had so far denied him. Corruption of officials was perfectly usual in those times, and if Bacon in particular was made the object of attack, it was not because he had been guilty of especially shocking faults, but because the intention was to strike at the whole in the person of an especially vulnerable representative of it. It was for that reason that the King implored Bacon to accept the verdict without opposition, and promised to rehabilitate him at the first favourable opportunity, if he would, by his non-resistance, facilitate the extension of the campaign; for that reason, too, Bacon refrained from all defence, though with his great reputation, his extraordinary gifts of oratory, and the lax view generally taken of such offences as his, his prospects were by no means hopeless.

Both these offences, then, which have brought so much subsequent odium on Bacon's name, had their source in a boundless servility to the Court, an almost morbid fear of royal disfavour and public dismissal. In order to win the Queen's favour, he wrote to order that libellous attack on the memory of his friend; lest he should lose the King's favour, he sacrificed his own good name in posterity's eyes by his failure to make any attempt at self-defence. If we may attempt to sum up his character, we should say that he was certainly neither a mean nor an ill-natured man (on the contrary even his enemies describe him as kindly, helpful, affable, free from arrogance, and — what was almost unique at that time — free from vengefulness); but he was a weak man, and a cold man, and however strange it may sound in a man of Bacon's reputation, an unphilosophical man. For, if it be one of the fundamental qualities of a philosopher to despise actualities, Bacon was no philosopher; he could not live without titles, offices, dignities, the smile of the monarch, and the bows of courtiers, without horses, estates, robes, silver plate, and lackeys. Honours, power, wealth, transitory enjoyment, and empty show meant more to him than peace and knowledge.

Bacon as philosopher

We might even question if he does not show himself as little a philosopher in his works as in his deeds. The common view is that his life was as disgraceful and shameful as his achievement is glorious and incomparable. But there is much to be said for the argument that both views are false and exaggerated.

Bacon's philosophy, as its titles show, is meant to be nothing more and nothing less than an *Instauratio Magna,* a great renewal of science, a *Novum Organum* and the greatest creation of the time. "Truth is a daughter of her age," said Bacon, and what he aimed at therefore was a philosophy that would be the legitimate daughter of her times, the extract and sum of all the experiences, discoveries, and advances of the day. His observations are, therefore, in contrast to Nietzsche's, "topical" in the highest degree. His object is to take the pulse of his age and diagnose its condition. But his object is also to make a prognosis and point the way to new victories; as he said in the preface to his chief work, he assumed the rôle of the fingerpost. He hoped to achieve both aims by constructing a system of purely empirical philosophy. In his view, philosophy had hitherto been dominated by premisses which the reason assumed as something given, without regard for the real nature of things (a method which he defined as that of "anticipations"), and he opposed to it a new method of investigation, which he called that of "interpretations," which aims at the exact and basic understanding of nature. Reason must expound nature as a good interpreter does an author, by entering into her spirit as closely as possible, and this can be achieved, not by high-flying ideas and unworldly speculations, but only by patient submission to nature: "*natura parendo vincitur.*" To that end we must rid ourselves, above all, of the prejudices and delusions, the "*idola,*" which hold our spirit captive. Bacon distinguishes four classes of such idols; the first are the delusions which flow from the special character of the individual, and since they are lost in the indefinite and dark places, the *caverns* of our hearts, he called them the "*idola specus*"; these, however, are too manifold and incalculable to admit of closer observation and discussion. The second class is derived from tradition, respect for the authority of others' opinions, being blindly trusted although they are as much fiction as the stories of the *stage;* hence they are called "*idola theatri.*" Thirdly, as a result of our habit of putting words in the place of realities, there arises the confusion of conventional signs of things with the things themselves, of values of the *market-places* with real values; and hence come the "*idola fori*"; in this class come the first beginnings of language-criticism. The fourth class, the biggest and most dangerous, the hardest to recognize and the most difficult to overcome, are the "*idola tribus,*" the delusions native to our *species* which unceasingly compel us to translate physical nature into human, whereby the original loses its properties and takes on the spirit of the translator. The human soul is a mirror of reality, but it is a mirror ground in such a way that while reflecting things it yet alters them. But it is wrong to regard human senses as the measure of things. This might appear to be the beginning of a phenomenalistic view, but Bacon meant something very different from Kant and his school; for what he calls "nature" is not a creation of our intelligence, a product of our forms of apperception, but something whose true being human consciousness can well perceive if it only succeeds in ridding itself of the "*idola.*" Bacon is so little of a philosophical idealist that he loses no opportunity of denying the epistemological value of transcendental ideas and (as we shall see in a moment) shudders at the application of abstract mathematical speculations to the study of nature.

To him the surest way to the knowledge of nature-in-itself, nature as it really is, is the method of *induction,* based on observation and experiment and cautiously advancing from fact to fact; this he declares to be the only sure and fruitful way, not only in physics and the other natural sciences, but also in psychology, logic, ethics, and politics; and in this standpoint we have a premonition that heralded a whole series of valuable studies which were only attacked successfully several generations later. In order to give certainty and validity to inductive conclusions, it is necessary persistently and carefully to observe "*negative instances*" —

that is, the instances which are the exception to a hitherto valid rule, for a single such instance is enough to turn a rule into an idolon. Now, once conscientious observation and prudent conclusion have collected an irreproachable body of empirical material, the gates of the infinite world of *discovery* are open. The higher and higher perfection of this process is Bacon's favourite theme, and when he talks of it, his imagination rises to poetic heights. Yet this does not by any means imply that his philosophy is narrowly utilitarian. Among the experiments which are to be the most powerful tool for the progressive conquest of nature, he distinguishes those that bring light, and those that bear fruit, the former leading to new axioms, the latter to new discoveries; but he emphasizes particularly that they are the less valuable the more they lead to mere profit instead of the illumination of nature. He even scorned the mechanical activities of manual and factory workers in a way which aroused Goethe to reproach. On the basis of his new attitude to the world of ideas Bacon finally constructed a map of the "*globus intellectualis,*" a catalogue, division, and description of all the sciences, and in the process built up out of his own head a number of new subjects, such as the history of literature — which he saw with fine insight to be part of the history of civilization — the history of medicine, comparative philology, the science of trade, and stenography.

Bacon before Bacon

It will probably be clear already, even from this short exposé, that Bacon's philosophical system, though it contains a great many ingenious and stimulating ideas, has little claim either to depth or to novelty. He asserts, indeed, in the *Novum Organum* that induction is the true way, which none had tried before him, but in the very formulating of this axiom he has himself fallen a victim to an idolon, since even a superficial survey of the history of philosophy shows a number of negative instances. Even Aristotle, whom he so despised, knew well enough how to handle the inductive weapon, the Alexandrines used it with magnificent results on the most diverse departments of knowledge, and the whole of the Renaissance is filled with the Baconian tendency, in some cases obscurely, in others quite consciously. Bacon's contemporary the Italian natural-philosopher Tommaso Campanella, taught that the aim of all "*velle*" is "*posse,*" but that "*posse*" itself was only attainable through "*nosse,*" and summed up his teaching in the phrase "*tantum possumus, quantum scimus,*" which is more or less identical with Bacon's famous motto "Wisdom is power." Bernardino Telesio, who was born at Cosenza two generations before Campanella, the originator of the Telesian (or better the Cosentine) Academy in Naples, set up as a guiding principle that nature must be explained out of herself. Even older than Telesio was the Spaniard Ludovicus Vives, a contemporary of Erasmus. He, too, strove for the elimination of the subjective element from the observation of nature and wished to found all science on experience and to replace metaphysics by direct investigation and experiment; and he is far fairer to the ancients than Bacon was — "The true disciples of Aristotle," he taught, "question nature herself, as the ancients also did." But the most astonishing resemblances exist between Francis Bacon and Roger Bacon, the "*doctor mirabilis,*" who lived during the greater part of the thirteenth century, or three hundred years before his namesake. From Arabian and Greek writings, and by personal observation, he had acquired an uncommon knowledge of mathematics, mechanics, optics, and chemistry, and he sought to build up on them an empirical philosophy in opposition to the Scholasticism which was then at its height. According to him there are two kinds of knowledge: the one leading through proof to conclusions, which, however, can never bring to light truths wholly free from doubt; the other working through experiment as the only way to assured knowledge: "*sine experientia nihil sufficienter sciri potest.*" "*Experientia,*" again, has itself two sides, external through the senses and internal by meditation; the latter form, which is quite as important as the former, being almost wholly ignored by the younger Bacon. Further, Roger Bacon recognized mathematics as the basis of all natural science, in which again his insight surpassed that of his successor. Another distinction between them was that Roger knew how to make his theories fruitful: thus he invented magnifying glasses, reformed the Julian calendar, and produced a compound very similar to gunpowder. On the other hand, the theories of the two men again often show astounding similarities. Roger Bacon mentions four "*offendicula*" to knowledge, which bar the way to truth: respect for authority, custom, dependence on the everyday view of the masses, and the unteachability of our natural sense — thus almost exactly equating the *idola.* He prophesied an inconceivable extension of human capacity for invention and we are reminded of Francis Bacon in his fantastic constructions of new possibilities, his flying machines, vehicles which move without draught-animals, and boats which can be propelled more quickly by one man than by four rowers. We have here, therefore, another strange case parallel to that of Erasmus Darwin, who more or less completely anticipated the famous theories of his namesake Charles Darwin on inheritance, adaptation, methods of self-preservation, and struggle for survival.

Bacon's anti-philosophy

Novelty, it is true, is no criterion of the greatness of a philosophy. Bacon's misfortune, however, is that if his philosophy does not possess novelty (which is generally claimed for it) it possesses nothing at all. It is not a manageable and effective methodology in the modern sense, and it did not take Bacon or other contemporary investigators a step forward. These contemporaries were Galileo and Kepler, and he had as fellow-countrymen Gilbert and Harvey, the two greatest geniuses of the English Renaissance, yet, so far from helping them, he did not even understand them. He rejected their achievement, as of necessity he had to do on the basis of his own theory. For this had two catastrophic weaknesses. In the first place, Bacon had no sense of the value of creative intuition, which is the finest part of research, even of the exactest. As Goethe said in his "*Farbenlehre*": "Everything on the phenomenal plane was the same to him." There was no place in his Philistine method for the illumination of genius which sees vivid analogies that could never be brought out by the purely empirical observation and comparison of facts, or for the audacious capacity which overleaps a hundred unimportant links in an argument, to reach the one that solves and reveals all. He would never have understood the saying of Gauss — a grand genius of exact research if ever there was one — "I have got my results long ago, but I have not known how to reach them." That, too, is the reason for his unfairness to the Classics; and yet the syllogistic theory of Aristotle, on whom he looked so contemptuously, still has its use today, while his *Novum Organum,* which was to replace it and do away with it, retains but a historical interest. The second defect, as has already been indicated, is the almost inexplicable failure to see the fundamental importance of mathematics for strict nature-research. Yet this was just the revolutionary and creative feature of the new learning. Leonardo was its author and he laid it down that " no human study can be called true science if it is not given in the form of mathematical demonstrations." Kepler taught the same: " There is no true knowledge unless there is a knowledge of quanta "; and Galileo: " The book of the universe is written in mathematical letters." The test of the correctness of these principles was to be found in the new view of the structure of the universe.

It was not the lofty speculations by which the human mind during the next generations began to elucidate the structure and laws of the cosmos, the earth, its organisms, and the forces working therein that were guided on their way by Bacon, but only the more technological and material sciences of civic utility. We have shown briefly, and will repeat again, that he himself did not father such a purely utilitarian movement and always set the value of knowledge above practical use. But the tendency to the latter was inherent in his method. Macaulay did not interpret Bacon's aims justly, but he did draw their inevitable consequences when he maintained in his famous essay (which incidentally is a masterpiece of compact and variegated dialectic) that the aim of the Baconian philosophy was the multiplication of human comforts and the mitigation of human suffering, and that it therefore outflanked all earlier systems, which had scorned to subordinate themselves to well-being and progress and had been content to remain immovably on the same spot. He quotes a remark of Seneca to the effect that if it is the office of philosophy to make discoveries and teach men the use of their hands instead of educating their souls, it might rightly be argued that the first shoemaker was a philosopher, and adds himself that if he had to choose for himself between the author of the " *De Ira* " and the first shoemaker, he would take the side of the shoemaker. " It may be worse to be angry than to get wet; but shoes have saved millions from the wet, but we doubt if Seneca has succeeded in protecting a single man from his anger." It is unnecessary to go more deeply into this: the story of every religion teaches us that philosophy is able to arm us against worse things than damp and anger, and this conclusion shows us what sort of philosophy Bacon developed and, we may add, necessarily developed in his disciples — a philosophy for shoemakers or, to put it more elegantly, for discoverers of systems of foot-protection and apparatus for salvation from the damp. Macaulay continues: "If the tree which Socrates planted and Plato watered is to be judged by its flowers and leaves, it is the noblest of trees. But if we take the homely test of Bacon, if we judge the tree by its fruits, our opinion may be less favourable. When we sum up all the useful truths which we owe to that philosophy, to what do they amount? . . . A pedestrian may show as much vigour on treadmill as on the high-road. But on the road his vigour will assuredly carry him forward, while the treadmill will not move a foot forward. The old philosophy was treadmill and not a high-road." These sentences give us the essence of the whole utilitarian position, which derives from Bacon. Macaulay scorns the idea that the end of a tree could be in its flowering: trees are obviously created only to supply men with fruit, and philosophies to throw out useful truths. It does not occur to Macaulay, while he is collecting these truths, that truth and use are things different in kind, and in most cases mutually exclusive; and it is thus not surprising if the balance weighs so heavily against Plato. Truths have no justification unless they fatten men by their fruits, nor flowers unless as preliminary stages for such nutrient products; leaves have no value except as fuel for burning; a philosophy which is an end in itself has no end. Men who occupy themselves with such speculations move on a treadmill, wasting their muscular energy, whereas if they were on the high-road they might be using it profitably and progressively — for instance, in the transport of manure or the measurement of distances along the road. But obviously a pedestrian who wanders about to learn the beauties of the way, or simply to give his vital energies free play, is as meaningless and worthless as one on a treadmill, and a philosophy that does so is folly or vagabondage.

Bacon's fame

If, then, Bacon's philosophy was at bottom an anti-philosophy, and moreover was not new and not even scientifically valuable, to what does it owe the colossal influence which it possessed over its age and even over later generations? For qualities of some sort it must have had. "Unceasingly," says Emerson, "nature refines her water and her wine; no filter could be more perfect. What fearful testing must a work have undergone to appear again after twenty years, or still more to be printed after a hundred years! It is as though Minos and Rhadamanthus had given it their seal." Mankind is not wont to scatter its honours broadcast; *ex nihilo nihil fit,* and where there is smoke, there must be, or must have been, some fire.

One of the chief reasons for the extraordinary influence of Bacon's works lies in the fact that he was the greatest writer of his age and one of the greatest of all English prose-writers. He knew the secret of uniting colour with lucidity, content with clearness. His pen marked out in unforgettably sharp and brilliant outline whatever it touched. His speeches are described in his youth by Ben Jonson as containing some deep and earnest judgments, turned so easily and charmingly, with thoughts so strictly and thoroughly worked out, that he kept the attention of his hearers always strained and everyone feared the moment for him to stop. The essence of his style is mature splendour; its brilliance, richness, and colour are not won at the cost of solidity, order, and depth. His imagery differs wholly from that of Shakspere, whose poetry is dominated by a rush of pictures which gathers together a whole world of intercrossing and jostling similes. Bacon, rather, had a restrained art of portraiture which merely seems to put things clearly before us. Shakspere uses his metaphors to suggest, Bacon to elucidate. Thus he says of philosophy that a drop from its cup leads to unbelief, but that if we drain the cup, we become truly religious; that ethics has only thus far given us copy-books, but has not taught us how to hold the pen in writing. The wisdom of Greece he compares to a child which is ripe for chatter, but not of age to propagate itself; the philosophy of the Middle Ages to a consecrated nun who is shut within the cloister and kept unfruitful; the works of Aristotle to light tablets which, by their lack of weight, have been kept afloat down the stream while what was heavier and deeper had sunk; and the truth to the naked light of day, in which the masks, mummeries, and adornments of the world seem not half so fair and stately as in the candlelight of lies. In his *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* he says impressively that nature shines upon us directly, God (whom we can only know through nature) in broken light, and our own being (to which we come by self-reflection) in mirrored light; and, in the *Novum Organum,* that mere experience does as ants do who know only how to hoard; that the reason left to its own resources is like spiders, who bring forth their web from themselves, but that meditative experience, like bees, both gathers and sifts. Famous, too, is his remark that if we want to pass from the kingdom of nature to that of revelation, we must change from the boat of experience in which we have sailed round the world, into the ship of the Church. These happy similes, which streamed in on him spontaneously and permeated his whole writings, made every subject that he touched attractive and picturable. They enlivened even his conversation: he said to Essex once that his dominating manner to the Queen was like hot-water cures, which help for a time, but if continued, do harm; and that military fame and popular favour were like the wings of Icarus, fastened with wax.

The second reason for his influence we have already mentioned; it is that he expressed the impulse of his age, with its passionate devotion to the pursuit of knowledge and power, in impressive formulæ, far-flung slogans, and flaming labels; he gave his century the voice it needed. Thus his significance was, in the best sense the word can ever have, journalistic. He was the polished mirror in which the Elizabethans could look with delight on their own picture; and, more than that, he anticipated the type of the Englishman, which only fully developed in the course of many generations. He stands before us, the cool, well-informed, far-seeing Englishman, with his passionate positivism, his practical genius, his healthy mixture of logic and adaptability, his sense of realities and capacity for empire — gentleman, scholar, and traveller in one person, with a compass in one hand and *The Times* in the other.

The homely king

But the real *novum organum,* the true encyclopædia, the *instauratio magna* and creature of the times, was not Bacon, but the man about whom his contemporaries thought the only thing worth recording was the fact that he was once "wanted" for poaching, that he managed with fair success one of the many London theatres, and died in his native town as a moderately wealthy speculator in real estate. Bacon never once mentions him, not even when he is speaking of dramatic poetry, which incidentally he rated very low; for what could such a serious thinker, so noble a lord, or an age ringing with Armada conquests, colonial politics, and scientific progress see noteworthy in such comedymongers? Yet such is the way of men; they aim to have their lives elevated, the meaning of the hour explained to them, beauty displayed, and they strain feverishly and violently to see if there is a light to be found on the horizon. But there is no sign, for it is not to be found on the horizon. It flames up in their midst, at their side, within them — just where they never look. A poet, they think, should rise up like a distant dazzling sun, in blood-red pomp of colour. But there are no pompous poets: the true poet always moves about incognito, like a king in fairy-tales. He speaks to his people, but is not answered; all glances pass him by. Later there comes one and tells them who it really was, but in the mean time the disgusted king has vanished. Two hundred years after Shakspere men came who asked: "Do you know who this little actor and maker-up was? It was William Shakspere." There was general astonishment, but Shakspere was long since gone.

Shakspere lived, in a period of exultation and world-change and splendour, a peaceful, simple, almost banal sort of life. He began as supervisor and hack-poet, had his daily rehearsals, re-wrote plays, wrote a few of his own, bent over ledgers, costume-bills, and box-office takings, and only a few years before his death achieved his ideal: to live a care-free village-life in Stratford, far from theatrical make-up and manuscripts. The acknowledged "poet laureate" of the age was Ben Jonson, a man of stupendous learning, which he wove with amazing skill into his dramas, a tasteful maker of mosaics, a clear-thinking logician, who was thought a Classicist because he had modelled himself with care on the Roman technique of empty types, and who thought himself a high priest of art. Strange though it may sound to us, it is more than possible that his contemporaries saw in him the exponent of the high line, the poet marked for immortality, while Shakspere was an amusing and entertaining pot-boiler who wrote for the gallery.

The soul of Shakspere

The low, or false, value placed on Shakspere in his lifetime has appeared so paradoxical to many that they have sought to find a way out of the puzzle by denying his existence — a queer way of explaining the contradiction! For it is already difficult enough to conceive how this unparalleled creative force lived in obscurity; it is quite inconceivable that it should never have existed at all.

The retort to such doubters is to ask who, if not Shakspere, did write these thirty-six dramas whose power and depth have never been equalled. His name may perhaps not have been Shakspere, and what does his address matter? But he must have existed. Shakspere has come down to us in the surest and most trustworthy way in which genius can give evidence of itself, by the works of its spirit. His plays are the most evidential proof of his existence. There are many who have their proofs of identity, and birth and death certificates, but are in the eyes of history as though they had never been. Shakspere is certified by no parson, register, or doctor and yet he lives.

But we would give much today to be able to read a little into the soul of this " myriad-minded man," as Coleridge happily calls him. His soul is silent in his works: it has evaporated into the thousand-formed scintillating train of his characters. *Macbeth* is widely considered as the strongest blast of drama which this planet has hitherto produced, yet we do not know even today what Shakspere's intentions were. Was he writing to distract the public by a train of compressed horrors to which they would involuntarily succumb? Was he creating a contrast to Hamlet in a hero who was all action? Was he giving new and effective expression to some of the Scottish material which had become topical by James's accession? Was he proclaiming the final truths about the world and destiny as they had revealed themselves to him at the peak of his career? All such questions are but exhibitions of Philistinism; the lasting impression in Shakspere, even in the simplest comedies of the moment, is always that of a vast irrationality. The mysterious triple quality of genius, which was discussed in the Introduction, is to be seen in Shakspere in the most suggestive shape. He is the completest and intensest expression of his times: and although his times overlooked the source of the power-output, it influenced them in the most dominant and lasting manner imaginable; and yet the strongest feeling we have about him is that behind all these reciprocal activities he himself sits enthroned, a perfectly unique and unfathomable absurdity. To sum up in a word the essence of this incomprehensible man: he was the most complete play-actor who ever lived. Passionate but objective, slave of his subject yet its absolute master, he has characterized human nature in its crests and its roots, its shallows and its abysses, its refinements and its brutality, its dreams, its actions, and its contradictions. He is the crudest butcher and the most feminine sensitive, the finest artist and the most tasteless barbarian, strutting like the nobility of his time in an overload of jewellery, striking at nothing, favouring nothing. For all things are but a part, which is to be made as credible and as impressively illusionist as possible. Thus he is also wholly unscrupulous as a plagiarist — the very idea has no meaning to him. He takes his text wherever he finds it to hand, in the confidence that his words will create something better than these texts ever were. Himself he never appears, and when one day he has played out the whole repertoire of humanity, he packs away his glittering marionettes, steps out into the night, and vanishes for ever from the spectator's vision.

Shakspere's theatre

And this vast fantasy, which included all that has ever been and as much again, had to be actualized by the master in a wooden sailors' tavern. What is still more remarkable, the theatre of this most erotic of all dramatists was womanless. But most wonderful of all, his dramas, though they had to manage without scenery, are at every instant pervaded and effectively influenced in their development by the dumb external world, which determines the destiny of men as truly as any of the real characters do so. The setting is so strongly painted and so organically connected with the circumstances that no modern dramatist, with all the illusion-technique of the present-day stage, has equalled him. In the first scene in *Hamlet,* for example, the ambience is part and parcel of the exposition; all who step upon this stage *cannot* but see Hamlet's father: the ghost rises of necessity out of the mist and darkness. Or consider the night in *Macbeth* — it is almost the arch-conspirator; the storm-beaten heath in *Lear;* the atmosphere of *Romeo and Juliet,* compounded of scented flowers, of moonlight, and of nightingale's song; the magic sylvan world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The whole of nature joins in the play in a strange pantheistic fashion, and causes feelings and actions to rise mysteriously from her bosom.

Correspondingly Shakspere is one of the greatest poets of the unconscious, of the dumb and dark impulses which are the real motives of our actions and yet almost wholly escape our own guidance. Hence, too, the elemental effect of his dramas, which have the character of primary happenings, natural events-in-themselves; the inimitable realism which comes not from the surface but from the depths; the inexpressibility which he shares with life. The Montaigne-man, as we have seen, dug deeper than hitherto into the dark pit of man's soul, and of necessity ended in agnosticism, and it is a similar world-feeling which makes Shakspere's drama so chaotic. This extends over external form also; he is the dramatist of a variegated succession of scenes, of a dissolved architecture; and this precisely is what makes his theatre immortal. For the " rigid system " of Classicism can only live as long as the devotion to a rationalistic organization of the artistic sense survives, but Shakspere's dramatic form belongs to all time; more, to all classes, ages, and levels of education; it is to the Classical drama as the popular tale (which is just as immortal, though every age pronounces it dead) is to the artificial novel. Devrient, in his *Geschichte der deutschen Schauspielkunst* calls Shakspere's dramas " the highest sublimation of mediæval drama." And it is so. With all its clumsiness of technique and lack of individualization, the mediæval drama is a treasure and a prize, the discovery of the true and only vital form of the drama. Pageantry of pictures and characters, mysticism and supernaturalism, are the innermost essence of all theatre-art, and the last great magician of the theatre whom we have seen in Europe has returned, even if by circuitous paths, to this eternal form. For if occasionally Ibsen may seem to approach suspiciously near the classical unities of time and place, it is only a delusion. The fact that the scene remains unchanged is an unimportant accident of the surface, for the action in its varied intricacy and manifoldness, its thousand interactions, wherein past and future join in almost corporeal fashion, is the product of a romantic art-feeling; and as far as supernaturalism is concerned, we feel, at the distance of a generation, that works like *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm* are only distinguished from a fairy-tale by their modern and therefore more refined technique.

The world as a dream

Shakspere's dramas are really plays, and that is why they are so amusing. They express the whole of existence as a dream, a masquerade, or, in more bitter terms, a madhouse. Action is folly; that is the nuclear wisdom of the dramas, and not of *Hamlet* only. Shakspere created a whole world of men of action, a complete zoölogy of this most varied species of ours, but he despised and laughed at them all. His whole life was devoted to drama, the representation of doing; the meaning of his mission was to paint copies of human activity — and he, as himself, thought all action meaningless, and his highest genius is expressed in the way in which he rises above his own active side. His whole philosophy is contained in the words of his epitaph: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." That, too, seems to me to be the meaning of *Hamlet;* Hamlet is so much a man of fantasy that in his dreams all that is to be is foreseen, presumed, thought to its end, and thus thought into non-existence; but things can only be experienced in full livingness once, either in imagination or in reality. Through no fault of his own, perhaps even against his will, Hamlet chose the first course; he dreamt the world so vividly that he could no longer live in it.

And what was this Shakspere himself more than an airy dream-vision, a flickering film, a trembling ghost and nightmare, moving through the world, uncanny and unreal, mirroring and magically driving across our field all the manifold happenings of reality, as one gigantic illusion of the sense. He sank like a huge firework, flecking the heavens with flaming robes of passion and globes of wit, trailing behind him an unending stream of rattling laughter and glinting tears.

The agony of the Renaissance

The world as dream, as mystery, as chaos, is an apperception-form diametrically opposed to the Renaissance, of which Shakspere is not the culmination, but the close and dissolution. The period from the middle of the sixteenth century to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War is the agony of the Renaissance, as can be seen most clearly in the land of its birth. Exactly in 1550, as though to mark an epoch, appeared Vasari's famous work, which recapitulated and summed up the whole achievement of the Italian Renaissance. But already there had been significant changes of taste: in the hideous and bloody fantasy of Cellini's Perseus, in the enthusiasm with which newly-excavated works, so entirely un-Classical in their abandon and their massiveness, like the Farnese sculptures — Flora, the Heracles, the Nile — were welcomed; in the applause meted out to the magniloquent compositions, verging almost on the grotesque, of Giulio Romano. The key-word henceforth is no longer contour, but movement; sculpture is still the standard of all art-creation, but it is a new sculpture that dominates, one that is drunk, and flung out of all paths of moderation. Added to this was the load, increasing every decade with more deadly weight, of a general Hispanization; like a web the power of Spain began to grasp north and south: immediately sovereign in Milan and Naples, indirectly ruling in Tuscany and Mantua, Piedmont and the Papal States. The discovery of America had destroyed the Mediterranean as a commercial centre, and the great sea-powers of Venice and Genoa, gradually slipping from their heights, could no longer act as counterpoise. In Florence the Medici ruled no more as first citizens, but as Grand Dukes. The new popes were no longer world-friendly luxurious patrons of art, but fiery champions of the faith and earnest ascetics. Nowhere were men safe from the Inquisition. Italy, the nucleus of Classicism and freedom of the spirit, became romantic and clerical. But the masses, too, were willing supporters of the change, and the Counter-Reformation conquered head and heart alike. Even Tintoretto is the perfect painter of a world in numb subjection to State and Church, an ice-world, illuminated only by the weird rays of an ecstatic faith. The Caracci tried fruitlessly to maintain the life of the Classical spirit, the more fruitlessly that they were themselves the unconscious victims of the new spirit. In 1583 the Niobe group was discovered, a pathetic, larmoyant work of the Greek decadence, and its traces are still visible in the religious pictures of Guido Reni, whose sugary pathos affects us simply as vile blasphemy. Under the influence of the Tridentine decisions the greatest composer of the age created the style known after him as the Palestrina style. Francesco Bracciolini attained the heights of popularity with his burlesque *Lo Scherno degli Dei,* a travesty of Classical mythology; Tassoni's epic *La Secchia rapita,* which made Offenbach-fun of the Olympians, was famous throughout Europe — Venus is a mundane society lady, Jupiter a pompous old dullard, the Fates make bread, Mercury wears spectacles, Saturn has a cold and a red nose: the whole a barefaced parody of all Classicist art-tendencies. At the same time, after being artificially dammed back for almost a century, the wildness of mankind reasserts itself. A brutal plebeian quality enters into art. Caravaggio, the greatest master of the period, led the life of a dangerous hooligan and was nicknamed "the painter with the dirty feet." The favourite subject was the anarchy of man and the wildness of nature; brigands, disreputable and noisy mobs, desolation of rock and precipice, storm-tossed waters, thunder and tempest. Europe drives on towards the Thirty Years' War.

The second trauma

This war was the product of the limitless coarseness, the narrow particularism, and the fanatic squabbles of theology, and as such the strongest and most impressive concentration of the development of the preceding period. It was therefore a sort of closing point, and yet, like every crisis, it was also the birth of something new. It is the great watershed that divides and unites; and its treatment we shall reserve for a new volume.

We have now seen how Europe, by the victory of Nominalism and the great trauma of the Black Death, was subjected to a colossal shock which showed its effects in a psychosis of more than a century, a period of expectation; how at the end of the incubation the new age definitely appeared, still unclear and uncertain, full of atavisms, reminiscences, and relapses, but already proclaiming its essence in an extreme, exclusive, and self-dependent rationalism, or, what comes to the same thing, sensualism; how in the Renaissance of art and philosophy, in the Reformation of Church and State, everything was secularized, and a first comprehensive effort was made to subject the whole world of appearances to the ordering, sifting, and calculating of reason, complete knowledge being proclaimed as the only legitimate power. A trauma of a new form closes the period of birth. And thus the genuine modern age only begins after the Peace of Westphalia, and what we have had to relate hitherto has been the prologue and prelude, the prehistory of the modern age.

The new question

The following centuries bring with them the definitive, complete, and wholly conscious victory of the culture of reason. Thus they have a far more unitary character than the earlier stages: the precipitate of thought becomes stronger and clearer to us, the consolidating personalities richer and more numerous, the successive types of life and style demarcated and outlined with a degree of sharpness that so far we have only once met — at the height of the Italian Renaissance.

Reason, which awoke at the beginning of the sixteenth century and ever more extended and strengthened her supremacy during that century, begins at the turn of the new century to totter, and during the next fifty years is to lose her way; she observes the confusion, the contradictions, the disillusions, and the sufferings of life, problems for which she finds no solution, and then takes refuge in religion. But she still exists and will not be simply extinguished. Yet how to be both realist and rationalist, as one is by destiny, and yet supernaturalist and *homo religiosus,* as one would gladly be by choice? How unite these two outer extremes, how fuse these two extremest contradictions of human being? With this question and the attempt to answer it we are already in the midst of the Baroque.

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CHRONOLOGY

1348	Black Death
c. 1350	*Büchlein vom vollkommenen Leben*
1351	Konrad von Megenberg: *Buch der Natur*
1354	Death of Rienzi
1356	Golden Bull
1358	French Jacquerie
1361	Death of Tauler. Fall of Adrianople
1365	Death of Suso
c. 1370	*Piers Plowman*
1372	Death of Meister Wilhelm
1374	Death of Petrarch
1375	Death of Boccaccio
1377	End of the Babylonish Captivity
1378	Death of Charles IV: Wenceslas. Beginning of the Great Schism
1381	Death of Ruysbroeck
1384	Death of Wyclif
1386	Battle of Sempach. Poland-Lithuania
1389	Battle of Kossovo
1396	Battle of Nicopolis
1397	Union of Kalmar
1399	House of Lancaster in England
1400	Wenceslas deposed: Rupert of the Palatinate. The Medici in Florence. Death of Chaucer
1405	Death of Froissart
1409	Council of Pisa: three popes
1410	Death of Rupert: Sigismund. Battle of Tannenberg
1414	Beginning of the Council of Constance
1415	Burning of Huss. The Hohenzollerns in Brandenburg Battle of Agincourt
1417	End of the Great Schism
1420	Beginning of the Hussite wars

1426	Death of Hubert van Eyck
1428	Death of Masaccio
1429	Joan of Arc
1440	Frederick III, German Emperor. Nicolaus Cusanus: *De docta ignorantia.* Death of Jan van Eyck. Platonic Academy of Florence
1441	*Imitatio Christi* finished
1445	Cape Verde
1446	Death of Brunelleschi
1450	Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan
c. 1450	Gutenberg: book-printing
1452	Birth of Leonardo da Vinci
1453	Fall of Constantinople. Death of John Dunstaple
1455	Death of Fra Angelico. Death of Ghiberti
1458	Æneas Sylvius, Pope
1459	Beginning of the Wars of the Roses
1461	Louis XI of France. House of York in England
1464	Death of Cosimo de' Medici. Death of Nicolaus Cusanus. Death of Rogier van der Weyden
1466	Cession of West Prussia to Poland; East Prussia a Polish fief. Death of Donatello
1471	First observatory. Birth of Dürer
1472	Death of Alberti
1475	Birth of Michelangelo
1477	Fall of Charles the Bold; the Netherlands become Habsburg by marriage. Birth of Titian
1478	Introduction of the Inquisition
1479	Castile-Aragon
1480	Overthrow of the Mongol domination in Russia
1483	Death of Louis XI: Charles VIII. Birth of Rabelais. Birth of Raphael. Birth of Luther
1485	House of Tudor in England: end of the Wars of the Roses
1487	Cape of Good Hope
1488	Death of Verrocchio
1489	*The Witches' Hammer*
1490	Martin Behaim: globe
1492	Discovery of America. Conquest of Granada. Rodrigo Borgia Pope. Death of Lorenzo de' Medici

1494	Sebastian Brant: *Narrenschiff*. Death of Pico della Mirandola
1495	Death of Memling
1498	Sea route to the East Indies. Burning of Savonarola. *Reinke de Vos*
1499	Independence of Switzerland
c. 1500	Spinetti: the spinet
1500	Discovery of Brazil
1505	First postal service
1506	Reuchlin: Hebrew grammar. Death of Mantegna
1509	Accession of Henry VIII of England. Erasmus: *Encomium moriæ*
1510	Pocket-watches. Death of Botticelli
1513	Leo X, Pope
1514	Death of Bramante. Machiavelli: *Il Principe*
1515	Francis I, King of France. Battle of Marignan. *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*
1516	House of Habsburg in Spain. Ariosto: *Orlando Furioso*. More: *Utopia*
1517	Luther nails the theses to the church-door at Wittenberg. Egypt conquered by the Turks
1519	Death of Maximilian I: Charles V. Death of Leonardo da Vinci
1520	Death of Raphael. Blood-bath of Stockholm
1521	Conquest of Mexico. Diet of Worms. Capture of Belgrade
1522	End of the first circumnavigation of the globe. Luther's Bible
1523	House of Vasa in Sweden. Fall of Sickingen. Death of Hutten
1524	Death of Perugino
1525	German Peasants' War. Battle of Pavia
1526	Battle of Mohacs
1527	Death of Machiavelli. Sack of Rome
1528	Death of Dürer
1529	Death of Grünewald. The Turks before Vienna
1530	Diet of Augsburg: *Confessio Augustana*
1531	Fall of Zwingli. Church of England
1532	Conquest of Peru. Religious Peace of Nürnberg

1533	Death of Ariosto
1534	Death of Correggio
1535	The Anabaptists of Münster
1537	Wullenweber beheaded
1540	Foundation of the Jesuit Order. Servetus: pulmonary circulation
1541	Death of Paracelsus. Calvin at Geneva: Knox in Scotland
1543	Death of the younger Holbein. Copernicus: *De revolutionibus orbium cœlestium*. Vesalius: *De humani corporis fabrica*
1545	Death of Sebastian Franck. Beginning of the Council of Trent
1546	Death of Luther
1547	Battle of Mühlberg. Death of Francis I. Death of Henry VIII
1553	Death of Rabelais. Burning of Servetus
1555	Religious Peace of Augsburg
1556	Abdication of Charles V: Ferdinand I becomes Emperor, and Philip II King of Spain. Death of Loyola
1557	Battle of Saint-Quentin
1558	Accession of Elizabeth in England. Battle of Gravelines
1560	Death of Melanchthon. Nicot: tobacco
1561	Birth of Francis Bacon
1564	Death of Ferdinand I: Maximilian II. Death of Calvin. Death of Michelangelo. Birth of Shakspere
1568	Execution of Egmont
1569	Mercator's map of the world
1571	Battle of Lepanto. London Stock Exchange
1572	Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Death of Knox
1576	Death of Maximilian II: Rudolf II. Death of Hans Sachs. Death of Titian
1577	Birth of Rubens
1579	Union of Utrecht
1580	Death of Palladio. Portugal becomes Spanish. Montaigne: *Essais*
1581	Tasso: *Gerusalemme liberata*
1582	Gregorian calendar
1584	William of Orange murdered

1586	Stevinus: theory of the inclined plane; the hydrostatic paradox; communicating tubes
1587	Execution of Mary Queen of Scots
1588	The Spanish Armada
1589	Henry IV: House of Bourbon in France
1591	Death of Fischart
1592	Death of Montaigne
1593	Death of Marlowe
1594	Death of Orlando Lasso. Death of Palestrina. Death of Tintoretto. Birth of opera
1595	Death of Tasso
1596	Birth of Descartes
1597	Galileo: the thermometer
1598	Edict of Nantes. Birth of Bernini
1600	Burning of Giordano Bruno. Gilbert: terrestrial magnetism. English East India Company
1601	Death of Tycho de Brahe
1602	Dutch East India Company
1603	Death of Elizabeth: personal union of England and Scotland. Shakspere: *Hamlet*
1606	Birth of Rembrandt
1608	Lippershey: the telescope. Protestant Union
1609	Cervantes: *Don Quixote*. Catholic League
1610	Murder of Henry IV
1611	Kepler's astronomical telescope. Gustavus Adolphus becomes King of Sweden
1612	Death of Rudolph II: Matthias
1613	House of Romanov in Russia
1614	Napier's logarithms
1616	Death of Cervantes. Death of Shakspere
1618	Outbreak of the Thirty Years' War

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